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The Preacher's complete homiletical  
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THE PREACHER'S COMMENTARY

ON

ST. MARK

THE  
Preacher's Complete Homiletical  
COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
NEW TESTAMENT

*(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN)*

With Critical and Explanatory Notes, Indices, &c., &c.

BY  
VARIOUS AUTHORS

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New York  
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY  
LONDON AND TORONTO  
1896



A

# HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE

## GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK

BY

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*Printed in the U.S.A.*

New York

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## P R E F A C E.

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THROUGHOUT this volume the needs of the preacher have been constantly kept in view, and the main thing aimed at has been not originality so much as usefulness.

Besides a considerable quantity of homiletic material specially prepared by the author for this work, there will be found here a great variety of choice thoughts by different writers, carefully condensed, but for the most part in their own words. These extracts have been culled from a very wide field of literature, both ancient and modern. Many days were spent in the Reading Room of the British Museum ransacking old and rare tomes. Vast numbers of scarce periodicals also were searched and made to deliver up their treasures.

The Illustrations and Anecdotes placed at the end of each chapter may help sometimes to relieve the monotony of a close argument, or may perchance brighten up a sermon to the young.

It is not pretended that the Critical and Exegetical Notes are complete in themselves, or anything like it: the plan of the work precluded the attempt. Being restricted to an average of a page per chapter for this department, the writer was obliged to confine himself to the brief elucidation of a few salient points, adding references here and there to reliable sources of information. In cases of serious difficulty and controversy, a preference for one interpretation has generally been indicated, and reasons offered therefor. See, *e.g.*, the notes on chaps. ii. 26, vii. 19, xiii. 14, xiv. 72. But it must be distinctly understood that the reader is supposed to be provided with other commentaries of a more critical kind, which may supplement the slight treatment given here to the hard texts in the Gospel according to St. Mark.





THE  
PREACHER'S HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY.

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S T. MARK.

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INTRODUCTION.

**The Author.**—There seems no reason to doubt that the writer of the Second Gospel is the person associated in the Acts (xii. 25, xiii. 5, 13, xv. 37-39) with Paul and Barnabas, and spoken of by Peter (1 Pet. v. 13) as his “son.” To his Jewish name “John” (*Johanan*, “the gift of God”) was added, according to the custom of the time, the Latin surname “Mark” (*Marcus*, “a hammer”). Of his father nothing is known; but his mother, Mary, was evidently a woman of some note among the early disciples at Jerusalem (Acts xii. 12). He was also cousin to Barnabas, and therefore a member of the tribe of Levi. When or how he first came under Christian influences we have no means of determining, but his conversion was probably due in some way to St. Peter. If, as has been conjectured, he recounts in chap. xiv. 51, 52, an incident that happened to himself, we may think of him as a young man who had been impressed by what he saw and heard of the Saviour’s teaching and bearing, but too timid to make a determined stand for his convictions in the face of danger. In A.D. 45 we find him (Acts xii. 25) accompanying Paul and Barnabas on their return from Jerusalem to Antioch. Three years later he visited Cyprus with them (Acts xiii. 5); and he might thenceforth have been their constant companion, but that at Perga (Acts xiii. 13) he left them and returned to Jerusalem. His reason for so doing cannot now be determined. Being a convert of St. Peter, he may not have been prepared for a mission to the Gentiles, but felt more fitted for work among the Jews nearer home; or he may have shrunk from the unknown perils of the Asiatic mountains; or, perhaps, the novelty of the expedition having worn off, he became homesick, and yearned for the society of his mother. In any case it was not long before he was ready to enter again upon the mission field with Paul and Barnabas, the latter of whom

took a more lenient view of his defection than the former, who indeed refused his consent to the proposal (Acts xv. 36-40). Neither of them being willing to give way, "they departed asunder, the one from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed into Cyprus," and "Paul chose Silas, and departed." Thus this dissension between the two apostles resulted in God's good providence in the still wider diffusion of the gospel of peace. Moreover, the estrangement proved but a temporary cloud, for we afterwards find Mark restored to the full confidence of St. Paul, standing by his side during his first imprisonment at Rome, and recognised by him as one of the few "fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God" who had been "a comfort" to him at that trying period of his life (Col. iv. 10, 11; Philem. 24). Mark was at that time about to make a journey to the very region he formerly refused to visit, and the Colossians might have felt a little suspicious of him had not the apostle added, "If he come unto you, receive him." The next time we hear of Mark he is at Babylon, in attendance on his spiritual father, St. Peter (1 Pet. v. 13). There is one more notice of him in the New Testament, and that is contained in the last Epistle we possess from the pen of St. Paul. The great apostle is in prison once more at Rome, and the hour of his martyrdom is at hand. Mark is in Asia Minor again, near or in Ephesus, where Timothy is stationed. St. Paul longs for the society of them both. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me," he writes to Timothy. "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Tim. iv. 10, 11). The weakness of his early manhood had been nobly redeemed by a lifework of sterling fidelity to the truth. In all likelihood he did, on receiving this message, return to Rome, and there cheer the last days, not only of St. Paul, but also of St. Peter, for it is believed that these two champions of the faith suffered martyrdom together. Ecclesiastical tradition asserts that Mark afterwards undertook a mission to Egypt, where he founded the Church of Alexandria and the famous Catechetical School which produced such a succession of learned teachers. He is said also to have suffered martyrdom there. According to later legends, his body was in A.D. 827 removed to Venice, a city where he was greatly honoured, and which has ever since considered itself under his special protection.

**The Gospel.**—In the foregoing notice of St. Mark's life a great deal more has necessarily been said of the Evangelist's association with St. Paul than of his relation to St. Peter. But when we proceed to speak of his Gospel, it is St. Peter who comes into prominence. The early Christian Fathers are unanimous in testifying that Mark wrote under Peter's superintendence and by his authority. Justin Martyr goes so far, indeed, as to call the Second Gospel "Peter's memoirs." Tertullian says that it "may be affirmed to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was"; Origen, that Mark "composed it as Peter guided him"; and Eusebius, "that all the contents of Mark's Gospel are regarded as memoirs of Peter's discourses." Perhaps the most important patristic statement is the following, which Papias makes on the authority of John, a contemporary of the apostles, if not the Fourth Evangelist himself: "And this the Presbyter said: Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote

accurately whatever he recorded. He did not present, however, in regular order the things that were either spoken or done by Christ, for he had not been a personal auditor or follower of the Lord. But afterwards, as I said, he attached himself to Peter, who gave instructions according to the necessities of his hearers, but not in the way of making an orderly arrangement of the Lord's words. So that Mark committed no error in writing such details of things as he recorded; for he made conscience of one thing, not to omit on the one hand, and not to misrepresent on the other, any of the details which he heard." This testimony of the ancients is distinctly confirmed by the contents of the Gospel itself. The whole tone and character of the book is in complete accordance with what we know of St. Peter and his manner of preaching. See Acts i. 22, x. 36-42. The latter of these passages has been called "the Gospel of Mark in a nutshell." Short as it is, this Gospel supplies several details connected with St. Peter recorded by no other Evangelist (i. 36, xi. 21, xiii. 3, xvi. 7), and lays special stress on things fitted to humble him (viii. 33, xiv. 30, 68-72); while, on the other hand, it omits various circumstances tending to his honour (comp. vii. 17 with Matt. xv. 15; vi. 50, 51, with Matt. xiv. 28-31; ix. 33 with Matt. xvii. 24-27; viii. 29, 30, with Matt. xvi. 17-19; xiv. 13 with Luke xxii. 8). Bishop Chris. Wordsworth sees in the fact that this Gospel bears the name of Mark, and not of Peter, another "silent token of the humility of the apostle, not ambitious for the exhibition of his own name in the eye of the world." The human teacher is content to sink his personality and veil his identity, while he sets forth with graphic pen the words and deeds of the Christ, the Son of the living God.

**Date and place of publication.**—Here there is plenty of scope for speculation, based on the statement of Irenæus, that, "after the departure of Peter and Paul, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, even he delivered to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter." The time of "the departure" or decease of the two apostles being quite uncertain—every year from A.D. 64 to A.D. 68 having been assigned by one critic or another—it would be rash to attempt to draw the line closer than somewhere between these two dates. It is hardly possible to believe, at any rate, that the Gospel left its author's hands later than A.D. 70, as it contains no mention of the signal fulfilment of our Lord's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in that year. As to the place of publication, one ancient father (Chrysostom) mentions Alexandria; while of moderns one (Storr) fixes on Antioch, and another (Birks) on Cæsarea; but they give no sufficient reasons for rejecting the otherwise uniform testimony in favour of Rome. This tradition receives confirmation from the contents of the Gospel, throughout which words unfamiliar to Gentile readers are interpreted (iii. 17, v. 41, vii. 11, x. 46, xiv. 36, xv. 34; see also xii. 42, ix. 43); Jewish customs are explained (vii. 3, 4, xiii. 3, xv. 42); matters chiefly interesting to Jews (such as genealogies, references to the Mosaic Law, and Old Testament citations) are conspicuous by their almost total absence; Latin words and idioms are more freely used than in any of the other Gospels (vi. 27, vii. 4, 8, xii. 42, xv. 15, 39, 44, 45). Other



grains of confirmatory evidence may be drawn from the mention of Alexander and Rufus (xv. 21), the latter being probably the person referred to by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (xvi. 13); from our knowledge that Mark certainly spent some part of his life at Rome, coupled with the fact of his Roman surname "Marcus" gradually superseding the Hebrew "John"; and from the conciseness of his narrative, which made it so suitable for the vigorous intelligence of Roman hearers.

**Characteristics.** The fourfold Gospel, according to a happy illustration of the early Church, may be compared to the river which "went out of Eden to water the garden"; for in like manner do these separate records of the life and ministry of Jesus water the garden of the Catholic Church, and send their refreshing streams to every nation and every age. Each of the Evangelists had his own distinct design and object, which must ever be kept in view. St. Matthew points the Jews to their Messiah; St. Mark portrays for Gentile readers the King of men; St. Luke depicts the Divine Physician and Saviour of sinners; St. John declares the eternal pre-existence and Godhead of Him who was manifested in the flesh. The first Evangelist may be said to adopt the form of narrative, the second of memoirs, the third of history, and the fourth of dramatic portraiture. The subject-matter of the first three Gospels is to a certain extent very similar, though in each the peculiarities are striking enough to preclude the theory of one being copied from another. The most natural explanation is that all three drew from a common source, that source being the oral teaching of the apostles, which doubtless received a fixed form at a very early date. St. Mark omits many of the discourses and parables which occupy so prominent a place in the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Luke, but enters into more minute details than either of them as regards persons (i. 29, 36, iii. 6, 22, xi. 11, 21, xiii. 3, xiv. 65, xv. 21, xvi. 7), numbers (v. 13, vi. 7, 40, xiv. 30), times (i. 35, ii. 1, iv. 35, vi. 2, xi. 11, 19, xv. 25, xvi. 2), and places (ii. 13, iii. 7, iv. 1, v. 20, vii. 31, xii. 41, xiii. 3, xiv. 68, xv. 39, xvi. 5). He also takes particular notice of the emotions, looks, gestures, and actions of our Lord and others (iii. 5, 34, vii. 33, viii. 33, ix. 36, x. 32). We have to thank him, too, for often preserving the identical Aramaic words that fell from the Saviour's lips (iii. 17, v. 41, vii. 11, 34, xiv. 36). His main characteristic may be said to be vividness. "He sees history, as it were, by flashes of lightning." For him the past lives again in the present, and his life-like narrative helps us to conjure up the scene as if it were now enacting and we were ourselves among the bystanders. "Nor is this vividness merely the product of an opulent fancy. It is the consistency in details of a picture whose central figure is drawn in lines of fire. Those rapid and decided touches are inspired by a conviction of the love, the glory, and the strength of Jesus, the Son of God." He is so full of his great subject, so wrapped up in the contemplation of his Divine Hero, that he hurries from point to point with his favourite *καὶ ἐπεί*, as if in breathless haste to reach the vantage-ground of the resurrection morn, followed by the triumphant ascension into heaven and the session at the right hand of God.

## CHAPTER I.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Beginning.**—For best commentary on this see Luke xvi. 16. Law and prophets ended with John, who heralded new régime. **Gospel.**—Good tidings, from God to man, of redemption and peace; purposed from before foundation of world; proclaimed from Fall onwards, as man could receive it; now fully unveiled and offered to all by Jesus Christ. **The Son of God.**—Probably genuine, although omitted by  $\mathfrak{N}$  and some Fathers.

Ver. 2. **In the prophets.**—Read, *In Isaiah the prophet*. Remainder of verse, quoted from Mal. iii. 1, must be regarded as a parenthesis. "The Evangelist's mind went rapidly through it, and fixed its attention on the contents of the earlier and more remarkable oracle lying behind." Only here, and in chap. xv. 28 (the genuineness of which is doubtful) does Mark himself cite from Old Testament. In chaps. iv. 12, vii. 6, xi. 17, xiv. 27, he places on record quotations made by Jesus.

Ver. 7. **One mightier.**—*He who is mightier*; the Sovereign whose ambassador I am, the Potentate whose orders I carry out.

Ver. 10. **Straightway.**—*εὐθέως*. Mark's constant use of this word of transition shows how full his heart was of his subject. It would appeal to the prompt, energetic spirit of his Roman readers. **He** (*i.e.* Jesus) **saw.**—The Baptism over, He was engaged in prayer (Luke iii. 21), and then the vision was vouchsafed. **The heavens opened.**—*Rending*. Same word used of rending of veil of temple and rocks at the Crucifixion (Matt. xxvii. 51). **The Spirit like a dove descending.**—This was seen also by the Baptist (John i. 32, 33), and was the sign by which he recognised in Jesus the Lamb of God. It was His solemn inauguration as the Messiah (Acts x. 38). **A dove.**—Fit emblem of His gentle rule.

Ver. 11. **A voice from heaven.**—Heard again at the Transfiguration (Mark ix. 7), and in the temple court (John xii. 28). **In whom I am well pleased.**—*In whom I decreed for good*, the "good" being man's redemption purposed by God in Christ from all eternity. In vers. 10, 11, we behold all Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity working together to accomplish man's salvation.

Ver. 12. **The Spirit driveth Him.**—The human soul of Jesus, which shrank from the cup in Gethsemane, would naturally shrink also from close contact with the prince of evil. But, abhorrent as such an encounter was to His pure and holy nature, it could not be avoided. Nay, it must needs be the first act of His official life. The Second Adam must triumph where the first Adam fell.

Ver. 13. **With the wild beasts.**—Far from human habitation and companionship. Nothing was wanting to complete the loneliness of our Divine Champion in His first combat with the enemy of souls. **The angels ministered.**—Doubtless both to His bodily and spiritual wants. "He who would not turn stones into bread was now fed; He who would not call upon angels to uphold Him in rash confidence was now sustained by them; He who demanded worship for God alone received homage from these servants of God."

Ver. 14. **John was put in prison.**—*Delivered up*. Same word used of our Lord's betrayal by Judas. "Such honour have all His saints." **Jesus came into Galilee.**—From Jerusalem, where He had been teaching most of the time since His baptism (John ii. 13—iv. 3).

Ver. 15. **Repent ye, and believe.**—We have an echo of this Divine keynote in the first sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost (Acts ii. 38).

Ver. 16. **As He walked.**—As He was passing along by the seashore towards Capernaum, He encountered four disciples of the Baptist whom He had previously met and impressed (John i. 35-42: cf. Luke v. 1-11). **Casting a net.**—*Casting about* (a hand-net) *in the sea*. Here is one of the many graphic touches in this Gospel which betray the source of Mark's inspiration. Who but one of the two men engaged in the business would have thought of putting it in this way?



Ver. 21. *Capernaum* was at that time a flourishing commercial town on north-western shore of lake. A customs station, with military quarters. Its synagogue was the gift of a centurion (Luke vii. 5). Here Jesus healed Simon's wife's mother, the centurion's servant, and a paralytic; called Levi from the toll-house; and discoursed on humility, and on the bread of life.

Ver. 22. **Not as the scribes.**—They could only insist on the observance of petty rules invented by men like themselves; whereas He dived deep down to eternal principles, which bore the manifest impress of the Divine approval. Moreover, His teaching—unlike theirs—was exemplified to the letter in His pure and holy life.

Ver. 23. **With an unclean spirit.**—*In*, i.e. in the power of—subject to—influenced or possessed by. The demon had apparently obtained complete ascendancy over the wretched man, whose whole mind was now given up to uncleanness. But, as to this, see note by Dr. Maitland on pp. 32, 33.

Ver. 24. **Let us alone.**—This exclamation was probably imported here from Luke iv. 34, where it signifies the demon's resentment at Christ's interference. **What have we to do with Thee?**—*What common ground is there between us?* Truly, none whatever. They were far as the poles asunder—the “unclean spirit,” and the “Holy One of God.”

Ver. 25. **Jesus rebuked.**—The Saviour endorses the demon's admission of the infinite distance which separated them morally the one from the other, and refuses to accept at his mouth even so much as an acknowledgment of His own Divine claims. Throughout His ministry, Christ never for a moment countenances anything that might be construed into a truce with Satan or his emissaries—anything that could give colour to the sneer of the Pharisees that by the prince of demons He cast out demons.

Ver. 27. **What thing is this?**—*What is this? New teaching with authority! He commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him!*

Ver. 30. **Lay sick of a fever.**—*Was prostrated with a burning fever.* Intermittent fever and dysentery, the latter often fatal, are common Arabian diseases.

Ver. 32. **At even.**—When the disappearance of the natural sun announced the close of the Sabbath, the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings.

Ver. 33. **All the city was gathered.**—What a picture would linger in Peter's memory of this unwonted assemblage in front of his own house!

Ver. 35. **A great while before day.**—How Mark loves to emphasise the ceaseless activity and devotion of our Blessed Lord!

Ver. 44. **Say nothing to any man.**—Our Lord desired to check, as far as possible, the tendency on the part of the populace to regard Him as a mere wonder-worker, because such a reputation would inevitably blind men to the primary object of His Divine mission, which was not the healing of the body, but the salvation of the soul. **For a testimony unto them.**—He would afford the Jewish authorities no pretext for asserting that He set Himself above the law.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—8.

(PARALLELS: MATT. iii. 1-12; LUKE iii. 1-20; JOHN i. 19-28.)

*The preparation for the gospel.*—With trumpet-blast—short, sharp, triumphant—St. Mark introduces his Divine Hero, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” Wasting no time on preliminaries, he at once strikes the keynote of his theme—“the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Well is he called “*Marcus*,” a hammer, who begins by aiming such a powerful blow at the inherent scepticism of the human heart, and then follows it up with the workmanlike skill observable throughout this book! Determined to leave no room for mistake concerning the person of his Master, he at once accords to Him His full title, “Jesus Christ, Son of God.” *Jesus*—the Saviour; *Christ*—the Divinely appointed Prophet, Priest, and King of men; *Son of God*, Revealer of the Father, Incarnate Deity. Peter's great confession was in almost the same words (Matt. xvi. 16).

I. **The origin of the gospel in heaven.** 1. Not man's thought, but God's. To destroy the works of the devil, and devise means that His banished ones should be restored to Him, was far beyond the conception of any but the Creator. 2. The mode of carrying out this grand scheme was equally Godlike. The Creator became Himself a creature—God came to us in man—hiding His

glory under the tabernacle of human flesh, which He assumed, in order that we might realise His nearness, believe in His goodwill towards us, and be incorporated into Him.

**II. The preparation for the gospel on earth.**—1. This began in the first promise to Adam and Eve, in their sacrificial offerings, in the bleeding lambs of Abel's altar, and in the simple worship of the patriarchs. 2. It began afresh in the Mosaic legislation, in the ceremonial law, etc. 3. It began once more in the predictions of the prophets, who declared in words the gospel which the law shadowed forth in acts. And the last of these prophets was John, the greatest of them all, and the nearest to the kingdom.

**III. The Forerunner of the gospel and his ministry.**—1. The Baptist's mission had been foretold. The herald of Jesus had himself been heralded long before; and the appearance of one answering to the prophetic announcements was to be the sign that a Greater than he was at hand. 2. The Baptist's preaching was suitable for the time—positive, straightforward, unmistakable. It could never be said of him, as was said of a certain modern minister, that he spent six days in the week asking himself, "What on earth shall I preach about?" and sent the people home on Sunday asking themselves, "What on earth *did* he preach about?" John stood boldly forth as a preacher of righteousness, in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation. (1) In his stern, weird cry, "Repent ye," he made a personal appeal for personal action, and a particular line of conduct—not simply general good behaviour. Whatever sin has hitherto reigned in the heart, the opposite virtue must now take its place; otherwise, the kingdom cannot be received. (2) By baptism he pledged men to carry out in their life the discipline necessary to make them ready for the kingdom. This rite served to prepare them to accept a system in which sacramental means of grace were to hold a prominent place. (3) Besides repentance and baptism, particular confession of sins was exacted by John. And this was doubtless private confession; for it is highly improbable that they publicly confessed sins, the knowledge of which would instruct others in all sorts of evil, pollute their minds with all sorts of filthiness, and in very many cases give the enemies of those so confessing the power of accusing them before the law as long as they lived. 3. The Baptist's preaching proved a great success. Never before had the souls of the people been so stirred. And although comparatively few took the further step of enrolling themselves under Christ's banner during His lifetime, yet amongst those few were several of the apostles; and we know not how much of the Church's growth after Pentecost is to be attributed to the Baptist's faithful ministry. 4. The personal appearance of the Baptist was in perfect harmony with the truths he proclaimed. Bede says he used a dress more austere than was usual, because he did not encourage the life of sinners by flattery, but chid them by the vigour of his rough rebuke; he had a girdle of a skin round his loins, for he was one who crucified his flesh with the affections and lusts. 5. The self-abnegation of the Baptist is the greatest proof of his real nobility. Such was his popularity, that he might easily have become the founder of a new religious sect; for his disciples could not bear to think of his ministry as merely the preface or introduction to that of Another. But John himself never wavered in his testimony, never dreamt of arrogating to himself any honour; but maintained, with unswerving fidelity, that he—though he could claim high rank among his countrymen, as the son of one of the heads of the courses of the priests—was but the messenger of One for whom he did not think himself worthy to perform the most menial service, One who would baptise not merely in the waters of Jordan, but in the fire of the Life-giving Spirit.

**Lessons.**—1. Thank God for His mercy in the gospel. 2. Attend to God's

message by the lips of men. 3. Make diligent and reverent use of the means of grace. 4. Illustrate and exalt the gospel by your life. So you may be the means of preparing others to welcome Christ.

Vers. 4-8. *John's baptism, and Christ's.*—The question which perplexed the chief priests and scribes and elders (Mark xi. 30-33) need cause us no difficulty, because Christ Himself acknowledged and sanctioned His forerunner, and set His seal on the legitimacy of John's baptism, by submitting to it Himself. We find, moreover, in the preaching of John a strong circumstance in his favour. For who ever heard of an enthusiast, a self-inspired prophet, studiously disparaging himself, and seeking to fix the attention of the world on some greater Person who should come after him?

**I. John's account of his own baptism.** 1. He baptised "with water"—a well-understood sign of moral purification (Isa. i. 16; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Ps. li. 2, 7). 2. He baptised with water "unto repentance" (ver. 4: cf. Matt. iii. 11), *i.e.* to the end that men should repent, amend their lives, and "bring forth," etc. (Matt. iii. 8). 3. Was there any inward and spiritual grace in the baptism of John, of which the washing with water might be considered as a sign? We are obliged to answer in the negative. The ceremony itself was well calculated to make an impression upon those who submitted to it; but the same may be said of many other rites, which have nothing spiritual or supernatural about them. Such impressions may easily be accounted for, and furnish no proof that there has been any extraordinary exertion of Divine influence. 4. The baptism of John, though (like the law of Moses) it "made nothing perfect," yet prepared the way for "the bringing in of a better hope," and of a more efficacious baptism.

**II. John's prophecy concerning Christ's baptism.**—1. He states the manner of Christ's baptism "with the Holy Ghost." Not that "water" should not also be employed in this greater baptism; without this there can be no baptism at all. But here is the difference. John baptised with water only: Christ should baptise with water and the Spirit (John iii. 5). The Holy Ghost is unsubstantial and invisible; we can no more be baptised with the Spirit alone than we can with "the wind, which bloweth where it listeth." If this operation is to be visibly performed on us, there must be some vehicle through which the Holy Ghost is communicated to our souls; and water, the emblem of purity, is the most convenient and natural sign of that spiritual grace which cleanses and purifies the heart. 2. Consider now the effects of Christ's baptism. (1) It washes away all past sins and defilements in him who is baptised (Acts xxii. 16). This is the first grace of baptism; and even if it were the only one, who would not be astonished at the powerful operation of so simple a rite! Who would not confess that He in whose name, and by faith in whose name, water is made to wash away sins, must indeed be mightier than John or any other mere human interpreter of the will of God! Above all, since the effect is as beneficial as it is astonishing, who would not wish to partake of this inestimable gift of God in Christ Jesus! (2) It not only washes away all former pollutions, but it cleanses the heart itself, and purifies that turbid fountain out of which flow all the issues of life. A physician turns his attention, in the first place, to the immediate relief of his patient, and endeavours by suitable remedies to check the progress of the disorder; but when that is done, then comes the glory of his art, which is, to improve the general state of the patient's health, and get rid of those causes and tendencies which might bring on the complaint afresh. Even so has Jesus Christ, the Great Physician of the soul, invented this remedy of baptism, by which He not only cures the present disease, but renews, as it were, the moral constitution of man. By the "washing of regeneration" we



are "born again, not of corruptible seed," etc. (1 Pet. i. 23). (3) What baptism necessarily confers on all who are the subjects of it—whether old or young, hackneyed in the ways of sin or as yet innocent of it—is not actual holiness, but only the capacity of becoming holy. The man who is thus regenerated may, if so disposed, return to his former courses and become as dead in sin as before. But now it is no longer the fault of his nature. He can no longer exclaim with the unregenerate, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me," etc. (Rom. vii. 24). He has been delivered. Before baptism he was incapable of pleasing God; now he is not incapable. Before baptism there was "a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which was in his members." Now there is no such law, and no such captivity. In short, before baptism, whatever evil he may have done, he had this excuse to plead: "It is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me." Now he has no such excuse. (4) If any one be disposed to think that it is a small thing to be made capable of becoming holy unless we be actually established in holiness, let him consider this: What must it be to labour under a positive incapacity of working out our salvation; to know that if we should exert ourselves ever so much we could never, by any possibility, please God; that our best actions and intentions would be infected with the taint of our nature, and, instead of being acceptable to God, must necessarily be offensive to Him, as partaking of the nature of sin? 3. From all this there arise two inducements to holiness and righteousness of life. (1) The former things are forgiven thee; go, and sin no more. What does it profit a man to have his debts cancelled, if he begin immediately to run up a fresh score, and to involve himself in heavier liabilities than those from which he has been delivered? Shall not the last state of that man be worse than the first? See Ezek. xxiv. 13. (2) When thou art baptised, thou art "born again" of the Spirit: see that the rest of thy life be answerable to this beginning. The old man is put off: put off his deeds also. Thou hast purified thy soul through the Spirit; ask thyself, therefore, what qualities should spring out of a cleansed and renewed heart. The works of the flesh are manifest; the fruit of the Spirit should be so also.

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

**Ver. 1. Beginnings.—I. Human life is full of beginnings.**—St. Mark is constantly drawing attention to this. See chap. i. 45, iv. 1, v. 17, vi. 7, xiv. 65, xv. 18.

**II. All beginnings are full of interest.**—They afford great scope for speculation as to the progress and end.

**III. The gospel is the greatest beginning the world has ever seen.**—It is God's crowning work and supreme revelation.

**IV. The gospel is a beginning without an end.**—The "Sun of Righteousness" will never set. But though without end, the gospel is not without completion. See Isa. liii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 28,

*A wonderful beginning.*—What a wonderful beginning of things is here! The gospel! Had he recorded the beginning of the work of justice and wrath to make an end of sinners, we should not have been surprised, after reading the story of sin and ingratitude recorded in the Old Testament; but instead we have the beginning of the dispensation of love and mercy to sinners—a beginning which was the end of the old dispensation of law, types, and shadows, and the bringing in of the substance of all that God had promised man in grace from the foundation of the world. What a humble beginning it was! One man, one voice—and both man and voice



in the wilderness. Not a mighty prince, but a prophet-man, clad in camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about him. How differently from the coming of an earthly prince did Jesus appear to take up His ministry! Yet as we proceed we shall see the reason for this strange and simple "beginning of the gospel." It was because it was the beginning of the gospel, not of the kingdom; the beginning of the grace of God, not of the ceremonial pomp of a formal worship; the beginning of a dispensation which was to reign in the hearts of men, not in external paraphernalia of worship.—*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*

*The strong Son of God.*—The first words of *In Memoriam* might be taken to describe the theme of Mark's Gospel. It is the "strong Son of God" whom he sets forth in his rapid, impetuous narrative, which is full of fiery energy; he delights to paint the unresting continuity of Christ's filial service.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*The title "Son of God,"* besides here, is given—1. By Gabriel (Luke i. 35). 2. By the devil (Matt. iv. 3, 6). 3. By demons (Matt. viii. 29). 4. By apostles (Matt. xiv. 33). 5. By Peter (Matt. xvi. 16). By John (John xx. 31; 1 John iii. 8; Rev. ii. 18). 6. By Paul (Rom. i. 4; 2 Cor. i. 19; Gal. ii. 20; Eph. iv. 13). 7. By author of Hebrews (chap. iv. 14, and whole argument of chap. i.). 8. By the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii. 37). A fair deduction from Philip's teaching, even if the words are spurious. 9. By Christ Himself (John x. 36; Luke xxii. 70).

Vers. 2, 3. *Preparation for Divine visitation.*—I. **The two dispensations are in reality one.**—John is the connecting link between them.

II. **The Divinity of Messiah was plainly foretold.**—See Isa. xl. 3; Mal. iii. 1.

III. **The function of a prophet is here clearly stated.**—"A voice"—God's messenger and mouthpiece, going only where God sends him, saying only what God bids him. Dedicate your

lips to God, and He will fill them with grace and truth.

IV. **The willingness of God to visit man is evident.**—He only waits for the obstacles to be removed—hardness of heart, and contempt of His word and commandment (Rev. iii. 20). A readiness to have Him come into our lives and straighten them is the preparation of heart needed to receive Him

Ver. 3. *John a voice, not an echo.*—Goethe has said in one of his pregnant sentences, "There are many echoes in the world, but few voices." John Baptist's power lay in this—that he was a voice, and not an echo. The people of Israel had long been accustomed to religious teachers who were only echoes—echoes of the more distant past when Moses and the prophets spake the word of the Lord with living voice, and yet more frequently echoes of the teaching of some recent rabbi, himself an echo and unreal. Their temple courts in which they disputed the law, their synagogue in which Moses was expounded, were but as whispering-galleries in which men, surrounded with shadows, listen to sounds that belong not to the living world at all. But at length the accents of a living voice fell upon the nation's ear. A religious teacher appeared who dealt with realities, and not with semblances. He spoke as a living man to living men in an actual world.—*Jas. Brown, D.D.*

*The need of our time is for voices,*—voices which are not echoes, living voices speaking the living truth, out of the depths of a living experience, and in the living language of living men; voices preaching mercy and not sacrifice, righteousness and not burnt offerings, faith and not outward cleansing; voices bringing good tidings of blessed possibilities for a sin-stricken world, of the coming of a kingdom in mercy and in judgment, which are not two, but eternally and for ever one; voices bearing witness for the Christ—the Incarnation of divinest righteous-

ness and divinest compassion, the Redeemer of the fallen, the Helper of the helpless, the Brother of us all; voices whose accents are not hard and dogmatic and pitiless, but as of men who have wrestled, nay, who perchance are wrestling still, with sorrow and doubt and fear.—*Ibid.*

*The voice of the Baptist was a voice of severity.*—His doctrine was as stern as his raiment was rough. He proclaimed repentance—the axe to the root, the fan to the corn, the chaff to fire. He must, by plainness and boldness of speech, level mountains and exalt valleys, and so prepare a way for the approach of the Messiah. The corruption of human nature was a wound of long standing, that must be lanced before it could be healed. Sharpness of speech, like a ploughshare, must cleave deep and break up the stubborn ground of human pride, and make the heart soft and tender to receive the blessed seed of Divine love.

*Highways through the hearts of men.*—Crossing this mighty continent of ours not long ago, by means of that last marvel of our American engineering, whose daily track-laying, as I have been told, was wont to beat the slow-moving waggon-trains of emigrants that marched beside it, I found myself again and again exclaiming “What grander calling could there be than thus to write one’s name in iron across the unsullied page of those virgin western prairies, as part-builder of the highway that shall bind together Pekin and Paris, London and San Francisco, the commerce of Calcutta and the manufactures of Manchester, in one bright zone, whose central gem shall be our own American metropolis!” And yet there is a grander calling. May it be yours and mine to braid it in with whatsoever toil or study is ours; to build those other highways through the stony hearts and desert lives of men, over which the Master Builder shall at last come back again, to claim this world and all its treasures for His own; to bear along the paths that

Christian labour has cast up the saving message of God’s love, and so, by steadfast conquest of all sin and ignorance, to open wide the gates for His enduring sunshine!—*Bishop H. C. Potter.*

*The Lord’s pathway.*—If I can only place one little brick in the pavement of the Lord’s pathway, I will place it there, that coming generations may walk thereon to the heavenly city.—*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*

Ver. 4. *Repentance.*—To sum up the business of repentance in a word, the wise man (Prov. xxviii. 13) has reduced it to two heads—to *confess* and *forsake* our sins. St. Bernard almost as short and not much unlike, *Dolere præterita, Cavere futura*; to grieve and be displeased with ourselves for what is past, and to take better heed for the time to come. It must be a repentance *from* sin as well as *for* sin; it must be of thoughts as well as deeds, of errors in judgment as well as mis-carriages of life; finally, it must bring forth fruits, and be accompanied with works meet for repentance. To repent, to cry *peccavi*, and go on still in the same sin, to be always craving God’s mercy, and never stand in fear of His justice, is in short but to mock God and our own souls to boot. Further, our repentance must be proportionable to our offences. Greater sins must be taken to heart with greater regrets. The more scandalous and notorious any one’s faults have been, the more signal must his conversion be, and the more exemplary his conversation. The longer we have continued in any ill practice, the more lasting must our exercise of repentance be. Chronical and habitual distempers must be put into a course of spiritual physic. To shut up all: repentance, as ’tis a necessary duty, so ’tis a great privilege. None so perfect but need it; none so bad but may attain it: witness the penitent thief, the publican, the prodigal.—*A. Littleton, D.D.*

Vers. 4, 5. *A rite, message, and re-*

*ception.*—I. **A great message.**—1. The duty urged: repentance. 2. The motive: the nearness of the kingdom, with righteous laws and heavy penalties. 3. The privilege proclaimed: setting free from sin.

II. **A novel rite.**—1. John's baptism—far superior to the ritual lustrations of the Jews—foretold the purification of heart and mind which would result from the washing away of sin in the blood of Christ (cp. 1 Pet. iii. 21). 2. It expressed a backward look at guilt, and a forward look to mercy.

III. **A striking reception.**—There was that about him which attracted the attention not merely of the common people, but also of the political and religious leaders (Matt. iii. 7). 1. His prophetic voice broke a silence of three hundred years. 2. His announcement of the kingdom kindled Messianic expectations. 3. His manifest sincerity induced searchings of heart. If, like John, we would "reach the masses," we must first have something worthy to say, and then say it straight out. 4. We must recollect that this was the great Sabbatical year of the Jews; the people were less busy than usual; the whole land was at rest; a religious atmosphere was breathing around them; and so the awakened multitudes swept forth from their homes on every hand. Bethabara, the little fording-place north of Jericho, was thronged with excited listeners out of all classes and social conditions, eagerly jostling each other in defence of truth or tradition.

*The character of the Baptist's ministry.*—There can be no doubt concerning the general character of the Baptist's ministry. It departed in every particular from the ordinary and orderly ministries of the time. Judged by our standards, or by those then prevailing, it was distinctly sensational. It aimed to arouse, alarm, denounce, scourge. And its effects were in accordance with its aims. If we should describe them in the phraseology of our own time, we should say that there was in that part of Syria a great religious

awakening, and it would be to misrepresent the whole situation if we did not go on to say that the greatest religious movement that the world has seen turned, as its first hinge, upon this same religious awakening. There have been repetitions of it all the way along. Whether it is Peter the Hermit, or Francis of Assisi, or Savonarola, or John Huss, or John Wesley, the thing is too familiar to be ignored or wholly disesteemed; and no effort to distinguish between great national or ecclesiastical movements, occurring at long intervals, and an agency to be employed in connection with the ordinary on-going of parish life, though such a distinction is one which we are bound to recognise, can dismiss from our rightful consideration such agencies as the latter. In one sense the case of a parish and the case of a Church or a nation are widely different; but in another they are identical. The same slumbrous torpor, the same deadness to spiritual truths, the same triumph of the spirit of worldliness over the Spirit of Christ, exist in the one as in the other. It is, after all, only a question of extent or degree; and the exigencies of parochial life in particular communities often make that necessary, in some single congregation, which, under other circumstances, may widely, if not universally, be necessary.—*Bishop H. C. Potter.*

Ver. 5. *Confession of sin.*—There is a twofold confession of sins necessary in the practice of repentance.

I. **To God.**—1. It must come from a feeling heart, touched with sense of sin and grieved for it; not verbal, or from the teeth outward. 2. It must come from a hatred and loathing of the sins confessed, not from fear of punishment merely: Saul, Pharaoh. 3. From hope of mercy, else we witness against ourselves: Judas. 4. Free and voluntary, not forced from us; else it is not pleasing to God. 5. It must not be only in general terms, but there must be a laying open of our particular



known sins, so far as we can remember them.

**II. To men.**—Not always necessary, but in some cases only. 1. When by our sins we have offended and scandalised men—either the Church in general, or some particular persons. 2. When any sin lies heavy on our conscience, so that we cannot find ease or comfort. In this case it is necessary to open our hearts, and to acknowledge that sin which troubles us, to some faithful pastor, or other Christian brother, who may minister spiritual advice and comfort to us.—*G. Petter.*

*Confession of sin hindered by Satan.*—God knoweth all, saith Ambrose, but yet He looketh for thy confession. God is never more ready to cover than when we lay open. The fox, say our books, taketh his prey by the throat, so to stop all noise; and the devil, that fox, by all means hindereth holy confession, and bringeth men to deal with their souls as men use to deal with old rusty armour, either never or once in a year or two formally and superficially to scour it over. But as a thorn in your finger will grieve you still till it be had out, so will sin in your conscience still vex till it be acknowledged and confessed. If we have offended man, reconciliation to him is necessary. But to thy God speak all, saith Chrysostom, even whatsoever thou art ashamed to speak unto man, for He expecteth thy voice, although He knew it before, and He will never upbraid thee as man will.—*Bishop Babington.*

**Ver. 6. *The habits of the Baptist.***—

1. The Baptist's habits were thoroughly in harmony with his surroundings in the wilderness, also with the absorption of a man with such a mission. 2. His unusual style of dress was probably adopted with the deliberate intention of sending men's thoughts back to Elijah (2 Kings i. 8: cp. Zech. xiii. 4). 3. His manner of living was a protest against the prevalent worldliness and luxury, especially of the religious leaders (Mark xii. 38; Luke vii. 25). 4. One

inured to such a life could afford to be perfectly fearless and independent, having little to lose by opposition of the great, or to gain from their favour. 5. John's outward appearance fitly symbolised the rigour and austerity of the old dispensation. Jesus, the Mediator of the new and better covenant, as fitly "came eating and drinking," etc.

**Ver. 7. *The humility of the Baptist.***—

The highest buildings have the lowest foundations. As the roots of a tree *descend*, so the branches *ascend*. The lower the ebb, the higher the tide. Those upon the mountains see only the fog beneath them, whilst those in deep pits see the stars above them. The most fruitful branches bow the lowest.—*John Trapp.*

*Christ is "mightier" than John.*—

**I. In essential being.**—Son of God, and God the Son, as well as Son of Man.

**II. In word.**—John was but "a voice": Christ is the Eternal Word (John i. 1).

**III. In works.**—John x. 41.

**IV. In spiritual efficiency.**—The Baptist's success was all due to Christ's power working with and in him (John i. 16, iii. 27).

**V. In ministerial rites.**—The baptism in water was but a faint foreshadowing of the cleansing fire of the Holy Spirit.

**Ver. 8. *A symbol of moral purification.***—

The Baptist started from the Messianic hope as the one thing remaining to the nation promising a better future; but he perceived what had to be immediately done in connection with it, according to the requirements of the true religion, and he was the first man consistent and daring enough actually to do it. . . . Every individual had to prepare himself for the true kingdom, and as a regenerate man, receptive simply for everything that is pure and good—as a man who will not start back from the Highest One should He come—look for the mysterious but certain coming of the Lord. . . . The



submersion in the depth of the flowing water by the hand of the Baptist became the most effective, visible, and sensible symbol of the moral purification of this generation. . . . And this deep submersion, by the hand of a confessor, with this strict confession of sin, this vow and this absolution, of which it was meant to be the symbol, and this whole preparation for the Messiah, was something which had never before existed, and was the most striking sign of that mighty change of mind which was now about to be wrought in Israel more fully than before.—*H. G. A. Ewald.*

*The Holy Spirit's baptism.*—**The nature of the Spirit's baptism.**—1. As the Spirit of truth, He enlightens the soul (John xvi. 13; 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11). 2. As the Spirit of holiness, He purifies the soul (2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Cor. vi. 11; Tit. iii. 5). 3. As the Spirit of life and power, He imparts spiritual life, and animates the soul with strength to resist temptation.

**II. How the Spirit's baptism is communicated to us.**—"Except one be born of water and the Spirit," says Christ, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Thus He links together the outward visible sign and the inward spiritual grace. Holy baptism, then, as practised in the Christian Church, is not a mere rite or ordinance, a door, so to speak,

admitting into a state of grace, but that, and something much more, even a sacrament, a medium or vehicle of conveying Divine grace itself. At "the font of regeneration" the person baptised is made a member of Christ, and by virtue of that membership a child of God; and by virtue of that adoption into Divine sonship an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

**III. The results that should follow the Spirit's baptism.**—1. Careful instruction of the neophyte. "Disciple all the nations." How? "*Baptising them.*" What next? "*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). Human agency in the Church must develop and translate into life the Divine energy implanted in baptism. 2. Perseverance in the faith. This includes—(1) Diligent and continuous effort to attain "the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2) Earnest endeavour to correct and abandon all that is wrong in action, word, and thought. (3) Ready compliance with the will of God in all things, with vigour and resolution of mind to speak, work, and suffer for the truth. (4) Complete reliance on Christ alone—and not on any external apparatus or means of grace—for all that we need to make us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—13.

(PARALLELS: MATT. iii. 13—iv. 11; LUKE iii. 21—iv. 13; JOHN i. 29-42.)

*Christ's preparation for ministry*—"The beginning of the gospel" advances here another stage. "The Coming One" has come. The Son of God takes His place in history as Son of Man, and proceeds to "fulfil all righteousness," identifying Himself in every possible way with the race He has come to redeem and save.

**I. Christ is prepared for ministry by baptism.**—1. He was about thirty years of age at the time (Luke iii. 23)—the age at which the Levites entered upon their work (Num. iv. 3). Hitherto—with the exception of an occasional visit to the capital—His life had been passed in seclusion at Nazareth, the Scriptures His daily study, the deep problems of human sin and misery His constant thought. Now He prepares to stand forth as the Champion of humanity by confessing their sins and expressing their repentance. 2. The place—on the

eastern bank of the Jordan, near Jericho—to which Jesus came from Nazareth to be baptised was full of historic memories, carrying the mind back to the greatest of the judges, and one of the greatest of the prophets. There the Israelites crossed the Jordan dryshod, and entered with Joshua the promised land (Josh. iii.); there Elijah, accompanied by Elisha, smote the stream with his mantle and opened a passage through its rapid waters (2 Kings ii. 8). 3. But why should Jesus submit to the baptism of John? If we could answer this question fully, we should be well on the way to solve the mystery of the Incarnation. We can only dimly perceive some of the motives for this amazing condescension. (1) Although the Sinless One, Christ was baptised with the baptism of repentance, because He chose—for us men and for our salvation—to be reckoned amongst sinners as if He were one Himself, and to receive the outward sign of the cleansing away of that evil and defiling thing in which He had no part. (2) Although John's superior in nature, Christ received baptism from him as if He had been inferior in office, for He was now dedicating Himself to His great work as the Second Adam and New Head of the race. (3) Although King, Messiah, and not merely a subject in the heavenly kingdom, it was yet fit that He should be anointed for His own place in that kingdom; and who was so fit to perform that office as he who had prepared the way before Him? (4) Moreover, by Himself receiving baptism, He “sanctified water to the mystical washing away of sin.” This was the beginning of that sacramental system which naturally flows from, and is the extension of, the Incarnation. Hitherto baptism had been but a sign, a figure, an emblem; henceforth it was to be a means, a channel, for the conveyance of Divine grace: hitherto God had been conceived of as far away in heaven; now He was to be regarded as having come down to make His abode amongst men. 4. Here, for a brief moment, the veil was drawn aside which shrouds the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The voice of God the Father is heard from heaven, God the Holy Spirit is seen descending through the opened heaven to earth, and God the Son is incarnate on earth in the likeness of our humanity, as the link between it and heaven.

**II. Christ is prepared for ministry by temptation.**—1. A special interest belongs to this chapter of Christ's life, because the narrative can only have been derived from His own lips, no human eye having witnessed His contest with the powers of evil. 2. From the waters of baptism He proceeds at once into the fires of temptation. This was no accident in His life, but part of the Divine plan for His equipment as our Representative and Head. Just when Satan's fury was at its height—the heavenly attestation of Christ's Sonship ringing in his ears—the Holy Spirit urges Jesus forward to the battle. Both the combatants realise that it is a matter of life and death—that if Satan be worsted now, it is the beginning of the end of his rule over men. He lays his plans accordingly, with the utmost skill and craft. 3. The scene of the encounter, if tradition may be trusted, was the wilderness of Jericho, the Quarantania of later days; a region full of rocks and caverns, to which hermits have often resorted, and whither pious pilgrims still wend their way, believing that a vivid realisation of their Saviour's victory will be helpful to themselves. Some suppose, however, that Christ was carried by the Spirit into the more distant desert of Arabia, to the place where Moses and Elijah had fasted and held communion with God (Exod. xxxiv. 28; 1 Kings xix. 8-18), and where afterwards St. Paul passed a season of seclusion and prayer (Gal. i. 17). 4. How far was it possible for Christ to be tempted? The following answer, condensed mainly from Dr. Liddon's *Divinity of our Lord*, may help to place this matter in a true light. (1) We must here distinguish between (a) direct temptation to moral evil, *i.e.* an appeal to a capacity of self-will which might be quickened into active disobedience to the will of God; and (b) what may

be termed indirect temptation, *i.e.* an appeal to instincts *per se* innocent, as belonging to man in his unfallen state, which can make obedience wear the form of a painful effort or sacrifice. (2) Jesus was—(a) Emmanuel (Matt. i. 23), Himself God the Saviour; (b) Son of God (Luke i. 35), implying a pre-existent superhuman personality in Him. (3) This union of the Divine and human natures in Christ was not fatal to the perfection of either. But it was inconsistent with the presence of anything in Christ's manhood that could contradict the essence of the perfect moral Being, *i.e.* the holiness of God. If He could have sinned, the Incarnation would have been a phantom. The sharpest arrows of the tempter struck Him, but, like darts lighting upon a hard polished surface, they glanced aside. Moreover, as it would seem, the personal union of the two natures in Christ involved, at least, the sight of the Beatific Vision by His humanity; and if we cannot conceive of the blessed as sinning while they worship around the throne, much less can we conceive it in One in whom "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (4) But the union of Christ's manhood with His Godhead did not exempt it from simple human instincts, such as, *e.g.*, a shrinking from bodily pain. See Hooker, *E. P.*, v. 48. Upon Christ's human will in its inchoate or rudimentary stage of desire, uninformed by reason, an approaching trial might so far act as a temptation, as, *e.g.*, to produce a wish that obedience might be compatible with escape from suffering. But it could not produce, even for one moment, any wish to be free from the law of obedience itself. (5) Questions: (a) Is this statement consistent with Heb. ii. 17, iv. 15, v. 7? Yes: see Heb. vii. 26; 1 John iii. 5. Scripture denies the existence, not merely of any sinful thinking or acting, but of any ultimate roots and sources of sin, of any propensities or inclinations, however latent and rudimentary, towards sin, in Christ. When therefore Scripture speaks of His perfect assimilation to us, it must be understood of physical and mental pain in all their forms, not of any moral assimilation. (b) Is this account consistent with the exigencies of Christ's redemptive work? Certainly. He is not less truly representative of our race, because in Him it has recovered its perfection. His victory is none the less real and precious, because, morally speaking, it was inevitable. Nay, He could not have been the Sinless Victim, offered freely for a sinful world (1 Pet. iii. 18), unless He had been thus superior to the moral infirmities of His brethren. (c) Does not such an account impair the full form of Christ's example? We gain in the perfection of the moral Ideal thus placed before us, to say nothing of the perfection of the Mediator between God and man, more than we can lose in moral vigour, upon discovering that His obedience was wrought out in a nature unlike our own in the one point of absolute purity. (d) But does not such an account reflect upon Christ's moral greatness, and practically deny His moral liberty? No. The highest liberty does not imply the moral capacity of doing wrong. God is the one perfectly free Being; yet God cannot sin. The real temptation of a sinless Christ is not less precious to us than the temptation of a Christ who could have sinned would be. It forms a much truer and more perfect contrast to the failure of our first parent. It occupies a chief place in that long series of acts of condescension which begins with the Nativity and ends on the Cross. It is a lesson for all times as to the true method of resisting the tempter. Finally, it is the source of that strength whereby all later victories over Satan have been won: Christ, the Sinless One, has conquered the enemy in His sin-stained members.

**Lessons.** 1. Seasons of special grace are often succeeded by seasons of special difficulty and trial; therefore, "be not high-minded, but fear." 2. Solitude and separation from the world are no more free from spiritual danger than a state of intercourse with one's fellow-men. 3. While ever praying, "Lead



us not into temptation," and being careful not to run into it of one's own accord, the Christian must remember that when he is tempted it is his duty to fight, and by God's grace overcome. 4. Christ fought the battle, and gained the victory, with the very weapons that are in the hands of all Christians; and He now waits to succour all them that are tempted.

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 9. *The Jordan*, says Dr. Otts, has so many peculiarities that it cannot be compared with any other river on the face of the globe. It is the one sacred river of Scripture—the only one. It has never been navigated, and it empties itself into a sea that has never had a port. It springs out of the snows that rest upon the lofty tops of the heaven-aspiring mountains, and it rushes madly through its narrow and ever-descending valley until it empties itself in a sea that is far below the level of all other seas. It is full of life, but after running its short career it suddenly dies away in the lap of death. At its sources, and for a long way down its course, its waters are as clear as crystal; and flashing in the sunbeams, they look like a flowing stream of molten silver; but before losing itself in the sea of death, its waters become muddy, as if filled with the filth of earth. Flowing into a sea in which no life can live, and which its unceasing flow never fills, it is a fit symbol of human life, ever descending and becoming corrupt, and finally plunging into the gulf of death which swallows up all streams flowing into it, and is never filled. In this stream was Jesus baptised, symbolising the glorious fact that He has entered the stream of our human life to redeem our souls from the sea of death into which all human life flows.

Vers. 9, 10. *The baptism of our Lord*.—1. By His own conduct and example Christ here teaches us to "fulfil all righteousness." He would have us ready and eager in our work for God—doing not as little but as much as we possibly can, determined to exceed rather than fall short. 2. By

His own submission to baptism at the commencement of His ministry, He teaches us that this is the manner in which we also must begin to be His disciples. 3. As it was on His coming up out of the water that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, so He teaches us to believe that in the sacrament of regeneration the babe baptised with water is baptised also with the Holy Spirit, who then cleanses the soul and makes it partaker of a new, even a Divine nature, by incorporation in the body of which Christ is the Head.

*Christ's baptism an epoch in His own consciousness*.—We must not imagine that every day was the same to Christ, or Christ the same on every day. He had His great moments, as we have. We call the supreme moment when the soul awakens to God, and the man realises manhood, conversion. What this experience signifies to us, the moment symbolised by the baptism signified to Jesus, only with a difference in degree which His pre-eminence alone can measure. It marked His awakening to all that was involved in Messiahship; and such an awakening could not come without utmost tumult of spirit—tumult that only the solitude and struggle of the wilderness could calm. The outward expresses the inward change. Before this moment no miracle; after it the miracles begin and go on multiplying. Before it no speech, no claim of extraordinary mission, only Divine and golden silence; after it the teaching with authority, the founding of the kingdom, the creating of the world's light. Before it the carpenter of Nazareth, the son of Joseph and Mary, doing, in beautiful meekness, the common duties of the common day; after



it the Christ of God, the Revealer of the Father, the Life and the Light of men. Now He who became so different to others had first become as different to Himself. What was soon to be revealed to the world was then made manifest to His own soul.—*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*

Ver. 10. *The Holy Ghost at the baptism of our Lord.*—In pictures of Christ's baptism one sees Jesus standing in the shallow water of the river, John from a shell or vessel pouring water on His head, and the Dove hovering over Him. The impression conveyed is that the Holy Ghost descended from heaven and lighted upon Christ during the performance of the rite, corresponding to, and a visible token of, the regenerating influence of the Spirit in Christian baptism. Yet the language of the Gospels gives no support to this idea. They all agree that the descent of the Spirit occurred after Jesus had been baptised, and when He had come up out of the river. St. Luke adds that the Holy Ghost assumed a bodily form, and that it was while Christ prayed that the descent took place. We may account for the general mistake in the artistic representation of this transaction by the prevailing notion which from primitive times has connected the Holy Spirit with the grace of baptism, and which saw in the details of the baptism of Christ a plain proof of this connexion. Of course there is a great truth in this idea, but it is not necessarily conveyed by the fact of Christ's baptism; and if we hold this truth, we derive our belief from other sources, and not from this incident properly regarded. The general opinion is given, *e.g.*, by Hilary: the Dove settles on the head of Jesus, in order that we might know that at our own baptism the Holy Spirit descends on us, and that we are bedewed with the unction of celestial glory, and are made the sons of God by adoption in Christ. But Jesus did not come to John's baptism that He might receive the gift of the

Holy Spirit. John's baptism did not impart grace. It was merely a formal ceremony, witnessing to the inward desire and striving of the heart. The water was a sign, and nothing more; it carried no inward and spiritual grace. Had the Holy Ghost descended as is represented in popular pictures, it would have indicated that what is true of Christian baptism was also true of John's rite; and this we know is not the case. The baptism of John was from heaven; it was a preparation for entrance into the new kingdom; emptying Himself of, or voluntarily obscuring, His Divinity, Jesus constrained John to perform the initiatory rite, thus fulfilling all righteousness. His private life, so to speak, ended in Jordan; the consecration to His mission was to follow. So issuing from the river, He stopped upon its bank, and prayed, and the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in a bodily shape, and rested upon Him, and the heavenly voice proclaimed Him Son of God, in whom the Father was well pleased. Thus was He announced as Messiah; thus did He receive the fulness of the Spirit for His Messianic work; thus by the unction of the Spirit was He consecrated Messiah-King. One naturally sees here a lesson concerning the Christian ministry. Not natural endowments, not the ordinary grace that accompanies baptism, equip a man to exercise the office of minister in the Church of God, but the special gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed and received for this end. I would submit a further thought concerning the spiritual life and well-being of individual Christians. As Christ was not prepared and commissioned for His work without the additional effusion of the Holy Ghost, so the Christian needs the added gifts of the Spirit to fit him for his duty as the servant of Christ. If we look to the early records of the Church, we find that apostolic teachers were not satisfied with leaving to their converts only the grace which they obtained by baptism; they supplemented this by conferring upon them further good

things. A practical comment on our passage in the Gospel is afforded by a transaction mentioned in Acts xix. 2-6. Surely they are not to be contemned who see here a cogent argument for the practice of confirmation. To fit the neophyte for the battle of life, to enable him to play his part as Christ's faithful soldier and servant, he needs a fresh outpouring of the Spirit with His sevenfold gifts.—*W. J. Deane, M.A.*

*Christ comes in the strength of gentleness.*—Through the ages Christ's strength has been the strength of gentleness, and His coming has been like that of Noah's dove with the olive branch in its beak, and the tidings of an abated flood and of a safe home on its return. The ascetic preacher of repentance was strong to shake and purge men's hearts by terror; but the stronger Son comes to conquer by meekness, and reign by the omnipotence of love. The beginning of the gospel was the anticipation and the proclamation of strength like the eagle's, swift of flight, and powerful to strike and destroy. The gospel, when it became a fact, and not a hope, was found in the meek Jesus, with the Dove of God, the gentle Spirit, which is mightier than all, nestling in His heart, and uttering soft notes of invitation through His lips.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*The Holy Spirit came as a dove,*—a gentle, joyous creature, with no bitterness of gall, no fierceness of bite, no violence of rending claws; loving human houses, associating within one home; nurturing their young together; when they fly abroad, hanging in their flight side by side; leading their life in mutual intercourse; giving in concord the kiss of peace with the bill; in every way fulfilling the law of unanimity. This is the singleness of heart that ought to be in the Church; this is the habit of love that must be obtained.—*Cyprian.*

Vers. 12, 13. *Lessons.*—1. We in entering upon our Christian vocation ought so to behave ourselves as Christ did in entering upon His mediatorial

office. He retreated from the world, and by that retreat He virtually declared that He had nothing to do with the world. Those therefore who are called to the preaching of the gospel, or to any other the like duty, are by this example taught to wean themselves from the things of this world, and to renounce whatever may hinder them from the performance of that duty, to which they are called. 2. Christ willingly follows whither the Spirit leads Him; and what His Father commands Him that He undertakes with all alacrity: we in the like manner ought cheerfully in all things to comply with God's will and pleasure; nothing ought to deter us from a steady performance of our duty; nor hunger, nor thirst, nor deserts, nor devils ought to be terrible to us, whilst we are safe under the conduct of Christ and His Spirit. 3. Christ soon after He was baptised was led into the wilderness to be tempted. After we have listed ourselves amongst Christ's soldiers, we must not expect to be idle, but must prepare ourselves for battle. Christ armed Himself against the assaults of the devil by fasting; this armour He Himself did not want, but He therefore put it on, that we might learn how to arm ourselves against our spiritual enemies.—*Bishop Smalbridge.*

Ver. 13. *Jesus was tempted.*—I. **That He might sympathise with us in our trials, and assist us in our times of need.**—The mariner who has once been cast on an inhospitable shore hastens with greater ardour to the relief of a shipwrecked crew than the callous inhabitant of the land who has never known the dangers of the deep. The orphan knows best how to mourn with his friend the loss of a parent; the bereaved parent most tenderly sympathises in the death of a brother's child. As we feel in ourselves, so we judge of others; and it is a consolation to us, not only that our Saviour was of the same nature and constitution as ourselves, but that hardships, miseries, and temptations

of the same kind were suffered by Him, and in a manner more severe than human nature is generally called to endure. We trust that He has learned to sympathise with us, and that His sympathy will teach Him to relieve.

**II. That we might learn from His example how to resist temptation and to conquer.**—The only weapon that He used was the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, which is equally available for us to wield. It furnishes us with the plainest directions for holiness of life, and the most powerful motives to obey them; it shows us clearly the pitfalls in our path, and how to avoid them; it animates us with visions of heavenly things, and wondrous promises to such as overcome.

**III. That we might be convinced that this is God's appointed path to perfection.**—God has had one Son without sin, but no son without temptation. Christ's trial consisted in the invitation to accept a lower ideal than the highest, to be content with a dazzling carnal glory instead of winning His way through divinely appointed sufferings to eternal renown. He was shown how He might turn out of the steep and stony path of sacrifice into the smooth and easy road of earthly pomp and grandeur—how with the world's weapons He might win the victory. But He sternly and emphatically refused to entertain the tempter's suggestion; and His refusal is a clarion call to us to remain loyal to our better selves, to trust implicitly the high convictions of our souls, to take up the cross and in it find the crown. It is not he that shirks the battle, but "he that endureth to the end," who shall be "saved": *i.e.* completely emancipated from all evil around and within, and presented faultless—unimpeached—before the throne.

*Three prominent points in our Lord's temptation.*—1. The relation of the supernatural to the natural in Himself;

or, on the other side, His relation to God as His ideal human Son. 2. The relation of God to the supernatural in His person, and the official in His mission. 3. The nature of the kingdom He had come to found, and the agencies by which it was to live and extend.—*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*

*Jesus the representative Man.*—Jesus is here the representative Man, the Source and Head of the new humanity, the Founder of the kingdom that is to be. When He triumphs, it triumphs. When He is victorious, all are victorious that live in and by Him. And His victory, as it was for humanity, was by humanity. The supernatural energies that were in Him He did not use for Himself. In our nature, as in our name, He stood, fought, conquered. How perfectly, then, is He qualified to be at once our Saviour and Example!—*Ibid.*

*Christ with wild beasts and angels.*—**I. The companionship of the wild beasts.**—1. Not only a graphic indication that the place was wild and desolate, but also a reminder of the dominion over the lower creatures given originally to man, and doubtless exercised by our first parents unfearing and unfeared. 2. Nor can we doubt that the fiercest denizens of the wilds would become tame and gentle in the presence of "the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven"—the dumb animals rebuking the madness of all who recognise Him not!

**II. The ministrations of the angels.**—1. The connexion between the three worlds—Earth, Heaven, Hell—is closer than we think. 2. Let the thought of our invisible friends banish all fear of our spiritual foes.

*Christ manifested as Monarch of all.*—1. Of hell's minions, whose assaults He triumphantly repels. 2. Of earth's fiercest inhabitants, whose wild passions are subdued in His presence. 3. Of heaven's angels, whose delight it is to minister to Him.



MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses 14—20.*

(PARALLELS: MATT. iv. 17-22; LUKE iv. 14, 15, v. 1-11.)

*Christ's early Galilean preaching and first disciples.*—What St. Mark here records is not the beginning of Christ's ministerial work, but His first preaching in Galilee. St. John alone fills up the gap between our Lord's temptation and the imprisonment of the Baptist. From him we know of the Baptist's testimony to Jesus at Bethabara (Bethany, R.V.) beyond Jordan, and the impression it made on some of his disciples; of the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee; of Christ's first passover at Jerusalem, cleansing of temple, and discourse with Nicodemus; of His continued ministry in Judea, baptising by His disciples, and receiving further testimony from the Baptist (chaps. i.-iii.). Then St. John mentions, in common with the other Evangelists, Christ's departure from Judea into Galilee after the Baptist's imprisonment; but he supplements their narrative by telling us of the incident on the way at Jacob's well near Sychar, the discourse with the woman of Samaria, and the gaining of many believers among the Samaritans; stating also as an incidental reason for Christ's going to Galilee, that the Pharisees had heard that "Jesus made and baptised more disciples than John" (iv. 1-42).

**I. The Forerunner's public ministry is closed.**—1. The last time we heard of the Baptist, he occupied a position of peculiar honour. His popularity was great, his influence permeating all classes of society. It looked as if the nation had come to its senses, and was ready to welcome its King. But, alas! the impression proved but transitory; the King, when they saw Him, proved very different from what their carnal fancy had painted; and so in bitter disappointment they turned from the Forerunner who (as they deemed it) had misled them, and took no heed when Herod seized and shut him in prison. 2. But the Baptist, although imprisoned, is not silenced. If he has been stopped working for God, he can still suffer in His cause. Moreover, even in prison he is able to direct his disciples to "Him who should come" for the solution of their difficulties (Matt. xi. 2, 3). And in the conscience of Herod (and doubtless of many others) his faithful testimony continued to ring long after his death (Mark vi. 14, 16).

**II. The One mightier than he takes the Forerunner's place.**—1. No man's service is essential to God. Though the workman be buried—whether in prison or the grave—He can and will find means to carry on the work. What we often regard as hindrances to the Lord's cause are really its greatest helps. It is not possible for a man to be "cut off in the midst of his usefulness," as we term it. He cannot be cut off till his work is done, and it is time for him to make way for his successor. God never makes a mistake in these matters, and He is never off guard. 2. The world will never succeed in suppressing the truth. The gospel has come here to stay; and no power on earth—or in hell—can dislodge or muffle it. Every religious persecution since the world began has resulted in the overthrow of the assailants and the firmer establishment of those assailed. The blood of the martyrs has in every case become the seed-plot of the Church, for its further development and ultimate triumph.

**III. The message of Jesus is a distinct advance upon that of the Baptist.**—1. While still enforcing repentance, He announces further that the time which was formerly said to be at hand has now arrived, and the gospel which He preaches must not only be believed, but believed in—relied upon as the panacea for every human ill. Faith is the hand on earth which grasps and holds on to the Divine hand reached down from heaven to strengthen and to aid. 2. He



takes steps for the establishment of the kingdom of God. Few things are more striking, as a revelation of God's method, than the measured tread with which Christ went forward to this grand enterprise. The Jews in general were eagerly desiring a liberator, who should gird his sword upon his thigh, and through bloodshed restore to them something of their ancient prestige. But Jesus is a Man of peace; His rallying cry bids them turn their weapons against no extraneous foe, but against their own darling lusts and passions. He calls upon them to repent; to change their minds, hearts, hopes, ambitions; to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; to accept the truth, which alone can make them free. For this purpose the kingdom of God is at hand; and in Him who speaks (though He does not tell them so) they behold its King. Such doctrine could only be received by a few here and there in the nation, and to them alone does He make His revelation in its fulness. 3. What is the kingdom of God? (1) This inquiry is most important; for the kingdom—(a) is revealed to us by God; (b) is the principal subject of Christ's teaching throughout His entire ministry, most of His parables being illustrative of it; (c) is specially emphasised after His resurrection (Acts i. 3). (2) The origin of this kingdom may be clearly traced. (a) The Mosaic economy was the kingdom of God in embryo. See Matt. viii. 12; Acts. iv. 11, vii. 38; Rom. ix. 4, xi. 17; Heb. xii. 22-24. That which existed Christ came to expand, extend, and perfect (Matt. v. 17). But this work was like a new creation, a new birth of the kingdom (Luke xvi. 16). (b) The kingdom of God is therefore spoken of as "to come" by the Baptist (Matt. iii. 2), by our Lord (Matt. iv. 17, xvi. 18), by the apostles during their first mission (Matt. x. 7), and just before the Ascension (Acts i. 6). (c) Immediately after Pentecost the kingdom is spoken of as now come (Acts ii. 16-47), and henceforth it is generally called "the Church." (3) The nature of this kingdom may be ascertained from the figures under which it is represented in Scripture. (a) A state (*civitas*) (Matt. v. 14). (b) A family, of which God is the Father (Eph. iii. 14, 15). (c) The vineyard of God (Isa. v. 1, etc.; Matt. xxi. 33, etc.). (d) A vine (Ps. lxxx. 8, etc.; cp. John xv. 1, 2). (e) A flock and a fold (Isa. xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 11, etc.; John x.). (f) A body, the Head of which is Christ (Eph. i. 22; Col. i. 18), and which the Holy Spirit inhabits (John xiv. 17; cp. 1 Cor. xii. 13). (g) The fulness of God (Eph. i. 22). From all this it clearly follows that the claims and rights of the Church are the claims and rights of Christ through His body: what is done to the Church is done to Christ. While she may suffer persecution (John xvi. 2), and men may reject her to their own hurt (Isa. lx. 12), or may be deprived of her on account of their sins (Matt. xxi. 43), yet she cannot be destroyed, for Christ is always with her (Matt. xxviii. 20), and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her (Matt. xvi. 18).

IV. The calling and training of disciples are marked features in the ministry of Jesus. 1. The manner of their calling is deeply instructive. (1) He honours diligence in lowly occupations. He thinks, not of the work, but of the spirit in which it is done. (2) He chooses the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, . . . that no flesh should glory in His presence. (3) He demands self-sacrifice from the very beginning. If any one be inclined to urge that it was not much these men left, let him remember it was their all. And there is no tempting bait dangled before their eyes to lure them on. The promise of "twelve thrones" was not made till long afterwards. All they are offered is, that if they follow Jesus He will make them fishers of men, like Himself. 2. As to their training, let these facts be noted. (1) Christ deliberately makes provision, from the first, for the perpetuity of His kingdom.

(2) He bestows personal attention on the spiritual education of those who are hereafter to be His earthly representatives and vicegerents. (3) He puts them in a position to testify as to His words and works.

**Lessons.**—1. Trust in God, who is all-sufficient for any and every emergency. 2. Use every possible means and occasion for furthering God's work. 3. Despise none of the ordinances of Christ's Church. 4. The following of Christ is to be preferred to the business of the world.

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

**Ver. 14. *The audience first addressed by our Lord.***—Did Jesus, it has been asked, first address Himself to a small circle of acquaintances, or did He teach in public from the beginning of His ministry? The latter is more likely. It does not seem probable that He began to work in secret amongst a few individuals; for although He would at any time gladly go out of His way to restore a single wanderer to the path of virtue, yet, after all, His message was designed primarily for the whole nation. Moreover, publicity was as much in keeping with the character of the age as with our Lord's intention; and He could not fail to find abundant opportunities of speaking to the populace.

*The kingdom a gospel.*—Jesus Christ preached the kingdom of God as a *gospel*: rightly understood it is not a despotism, it is not a terror; it is the supremacy of light, of truth, of love.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

**Ver. 15. *The kingdom of God.***—**I. The nature of true religion**, here termed "the kingdom of God." St. Paul defines it in Rom. xiv. 17. 1. It is well known, that not only the unconverted Jews, but many who had received the faith of Christ, were, notwithstanding, zealous of the ceremonial law (Acts xxi. 20). 2. In opposition to these, the apostle declares, that true religion does not consist in any outward thing whatever; that although it naturally leads to every good word and work, yet its real nature lies deeper still, even in "the hidden man of the heart." (1) "Righteousness": see Mark xii. 30, 31. (2) "The peace

of God," which God only can give, and the world cannot take away; the peace which "passeth all understanding," all barely rational conception; being a supernatural sensation, a divine taste, of "the powers of the world to come"; such as the natural man knoweth not, how wise soever in the things of this world; nor indeed can he know it, in his present state, "because it is spiritually discerned." It is a peace that banishes all doubt, uncertainty, fear. (3) "Joy in the Holy Ghost"—joy wrought in the heart by the ever-blessed Spirit. He it is who works in us that calm, humble rejoicing in God, through Christ Jesus, "by whom we have now received the atonement;" and who enables us boldly to confirm the truth of the declaration (Ps. xxxii. 1). 3. This holiness and happiness, joined in one, are sometimes styled "the kingdom of God," and sometimes "the kingdom of heaven." (1) It is termed "the kingdom of God," because it is the immediate fruit of God's reigning in the soul. (2) It is called "the kingdom of heaven," because it is (in a degree) heaven opened in the soul (see 1 John v. 11, 12; John xvii. 3). 4. And this kingdom is "at hand." These words, as originally spoken, implied that "the time" was then fulfilled, God being "made manifest in the flesh," when He would set up His kingdom among men, and reign in the hearts of His people. And is not the time now fulfilled? The kingdom is not far from every one of you.

**II. The way to the kingdom.**—1. "Repent": that is, know thyself—the inbred corruption of thy heart—

the bitter streams of vanity, ambition, covetousness, and all kinds of lusts flowing from it—the actual sins of which thou art continually guilty—and the just reward of thy inward and outward wickedness. If to this lively conviction of thy utter guiltiness and helplessness there be added suitable affections—sorrow of heart, for having despised thy own mercies—remorse, and self-condemnation, having thy mouth stopped—shame to lift up thine eyes to heaven—fear of the wrath of God abiding on thee—earnest desire to cease from evil, and learn to do well,—then “thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” One step more, and thou shalt enter in. 2. “Believe the gospel.” (1) The gospel, in the widest sense, means the whole revelation made to men by Jesus Christ, and sometimes the whole account of what He did and suffered. The substance of all is (1 Tim. i. 15; John iii. 16; Isa. liii. 5): (2) “Believe” this, and the kingdom of God is thine. By faith thou attainest the promise. Only beware thou do not deceive thy own soul, with regard to the nature of this faith. It is not merely a bare assent to the truth of the Bible and Creeds, but, over and above this, a sure trust in God’s mercy through Christ.—*John Wesley.*

*The requirements of the kingdom of God.*—1. An assertion: “The time is fulfilled”—the time of patriarchs, prophets, types and figures, etc. 2. A prediction: “The kingdom of God is at hand.” (1) Foretold by Daniel. (2) Not in word, but in power; subduing passions of men, and enmity of demons. (3) Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (4) Of this kingdom there is no end. 3. A twofold duty. (1) “Repent.” This includes—(a) sorrow for, confession of, and fleeing from sin; (b) striving after holiness. (2) “Believe the gospel.” God’s free gift, in spite of man’s ill desert. Embodied in Christ. Look to Him for—(a) pardon, (b) renewal, (c) heavenward impulses. And give God the glory.

*The distinctive qualities, aspects, and relations of the kingdom* are thus stated by Dr. A. M. Fairbairn:—1. It is present, an already existing reality, none the less real that it was unseen, undiscovered by the very men who professed to be looking for it (Luke vi. 20, xvii. 20, 21; Matt. xx. 1). 2. It is expansive, has an extensive and intensive growth, can have its dominion extended and its authority more perfectly recognised and obeyed (Matt. vi. 10, xiii. 3-8, 19-23.) 3. It does its work silently and unseen; grows without noise, like the seed in the ground. And its intensive is as silent as its expansive action. It penetrates and transforms the man who enters it (Matt. xviii. 1-3; Luke xviii. 17; John iii. 3-5). 4. It creates and requires righteousness in all its subjects (Matt. vi. 33, v. 19, 20). 5. It is the possession and reward of those who have certain spiritual qualities (Matt. v. 3, 10, xviii. 4). 6. It is without local or national character, can have subjects anywhere, has none for simply formal or hereditary reasons (Matt. viii. 11, xxi. 31; Luke xiii. 29). 7. It is at once universal and individual, meant to be preached everywhere and to every one, to comprehend the race by pervading all its units (Matt. xxiv. 14). 8. It is to be an everlasting kingdom, to endure throughout all generations.

*Faith and repentance.*—Faith and repentance keep up a Christian’s life, as the natural heat and radical moisture do the natural life. Faith is like the innate heat; repentance like the natural moisture. And as the philosopher saith, if the innate heat devour too much the radical moisture, or, on the contrary, there breed presently diseases, so, if believing make a man repent less, or repenting make a man believe less, this turneth to a dis-temper. Lord, cast me down (said a holy man upon his death-bed) as low as hell in repentance, and lift me up by faith into the highest heavens, in confidence of Thy salvation.—*John Trapp.*



Ver. 16. *The Sea of Galilee* fills a large place in the life of Jesus; on its waters and around its shores most of His mighty works were done. 1. It was originally called the Sea of Chinnereth, either from its shape resembling a harp, or from a town of that name near by (Num. xxxiv. 11; Josh. xii. 3: cp. Josh. xix. 35). 2. It was afterwards called the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke v. 1), which some consider a corruption of the earlier name; but it is more likely to have been so called from the Plain of Gennesar, so rich in beauty and fertility, on its western shore. 3. The name Sea of Galilee was derived from the province which bordered on its western side (Matt. iv. 18; Mark vii. 31). 4. Another name was the Sea of Tiberias (John xxi. 1), from Tiberias, which, although only recently founded by Herod Antipas in the time of our Lord, had become a large and flourishing town by the time St. John wrote. 5. The name given it at the present day, by Jews and Christians alike, is the Sea of the Messiah. To Christians it is the Sea of the Messiah who has come, to Jews the Sea of the Messiah for whom they still vainly look. 6. The industries engaged in were "agriculture and fruit-growing, dyeing and tanning, with every department of a large carrying trade; but chiefly fishing, boat-building, and fish-curing. Of the last, which spread the lake's fame over the Roman world, before its fishermen and their habits became familiar through the gospel, there is no trace in the Evangelists. The fisheries themselves were pursued by thousands of families. They were no monopoly; but the fishing-grounds, best at the north end where the streams entered, were free to all. And the trade was very profitable." See article by Prof. G. A. Smith, in *Expositor*, May 1893.

*The chosen lake.*—The Jewish Rabbis had a tradition which they expressed thus: "Seven lakes have I created, saith the Lord; but out of them all I have chosen none but the Lake of

Gennesaret." How have these words been fulfilled, in ways of which the Rabbis never dreamed! It is the chosen lake of Providence. Its dimensions are not large. It measures only thirteen miles by six. It does not lie high up above the ordinary homes of men. Nay, it is in a strange depression on the globe—more than six hundred feet below the level of the sea. Yet it is the fountain-head of a living water that has flowed equally to palaces and huts, and that has quenched a thirst in souls of all conditions beyond the power of this world's wine.—*T. Starr King.*

*Christ's activity in doing good.*—Walking was His constant exercise, to find out objects of spiritual and corporal mercy. This account St. Peter gives of Him, that "He went about," walked over all the country ere He had done, beginning from Galilee; but He did not walk only for the walk's sake. "He went about," says he, "doing good, and healing all manner of diseases." He "went about," as the sun goes his round, to dispense light and warmth, to communicate life and vigour to everything his active beams light upon. All His steps, whither ever He went, dropt fatness. Oh, may every pious soul not miss to meet Him in His walks! And sure enough it may, it shall do so, if itself continue to keep in His ways. So unwearied was His love, that, even to His bodily weariness, with indefatigable pains He walked up and down, to scatter health to the sick and salvation to sinners. He took a survey of the whole country, measured it with His own paces, and streamed forth blessings wherever He came. It fared with all places, with all persons, that touched Him, or He them, that came near Him, or that He came near, as it did with the woman that had the issue of blood, that they found virtue come from Him. And so it was here.—*A. Littleton, D.D.*

Vers. 16-20. *The Master's call answered.*—I. **The Master's call.**—1. It is a call first to discipleship, and then to

apostleship. Personal holiness must precede Christian usefulness. Faith must go before works. Let the heart first be given to Christ, and the dedication of hands, feet, tongue, and brain will naturally follow. To reverse this order is to mistake root for fruit, cause for effect. 2. It is a call to cast in one's lot with Christ, and receive the impress of His life. How could we talk of self-sacrifice in connexion with Christ's service, if we realised that He only asks us to relinquish what is ruinous to our souls, in order that He may fill us with the riches of His heavenly storehouse?

II. **The servants' answer.**—What these men replied in words we know not; but their action was full of the best eloquence. 1. It was a prompt decision. Ready obedience is at the same time the easiest and the most valuable. 2. It was a lasting decision. These men had then little idea of all that was involved in following Christ and becoming fishers of men. Yet, when the full import of their choice became known to them, they never flinched, or looked back with regret to the things they had given up; for in Christ they found every satisfaction of life intensified a thousandfold—nay, they learnt that without Christ earth's fairest scenes and chief delights are as a howling wilderness or as a never-resting, shoreless sea. Let us, like them, hear when Christ speaks, obey when Christ commands, believe when Christ promises, and follow whither Christ leads.

*Christ and His servants.*—1. Christ is the preparer of His servants: "I will make you"—how much was involved in that promise! (1) Authority; (2) Qualification. 2. Small beginnings compatible with sublime results. 3. The claims of God override all other claims—the sons left their father. 4. The discharge of common duties the best preparation for higher calls—two were casting the net into the sea, and two were mending their nets. The transition from one duty to another need not be abrupt. The humblest duty may be

very near the highest honour. 5. The place of the servant is after the Master—"Come ye after Me"; they are not invited to equal terms—they must walk in the King's shadow.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*Jesus and John.*—Jesus, in the silent conflicts of the wilderness, prepares for the open conflicts of life—takes the place of John, delivered to death by the carnal mind. 1. The history: a testimony—(1) that He honoured the Baptist; (2) did not fear the enemy; (3) was faithful to His people and vocation. 2. The doctrine: (1) The witnesses of the kingdom cannot be destroyed; (2) After every seeming triumph of the kingdom of darkness still stronger heroes of God come forward. 3. Christ is always Himself victorious at last in every scene.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*The mighty calling of the Lord.*—1. Gentler than any human request. 2. Mightier than any human command. 3. Unique as the victorious wooing of heavenly love.—*Ibid.*

*The calling of Jesus.*—1. To one thing—into His discipleship and the fellowship of His Spirit, or to the Father. 2. To many things—to discipleship and mastership, to co-operation, to fellowship in suffering, and community in triumph.—*Ibid.*

*The spiritual and the worldly vocations of Christians.*—1. Opposition. 2. Kindredness. 3. Union.—*Ibid.*

*The twofold earthly companionship of the disciples a foundation for the higher.*—1. Companions in fishing—companions in fishing for men. 2. Brethren after the flesh—spiritual brethren.—*Ibid.*

*The Christian and ecclesiastical vocations in harmony with the sacred natural obligations of life.*—*Ibid.*

*Christ's glance.*—One glance of the Lord, and He knows the heart under its rough garment.—*Bauer.*

*The brotherhoods of life.*—The world is covered with a network of brotherhoods. The first and simplest relationships run on and out in every direction, and multiply themselves till hardly any man stands entirely alone. 1. The cause of this interwoven network, this

reticulation of life with life, is the whole system of nature by which each human being takes its start from another human being, and is kept, for a time at least, in associations of company and dependence with the being from whom it sprang and with the other beings who have the same source with it. 2. Such relationships are full of mutual helpfulness and pleasure. 3. One final cause or purpose of this interlacing of life with life, by natural and indissoluble kinships, may be just this—the providing, as it were, of open communications, of a system of shafts or channels piercing this human mass in every direction, crossing and re-crossing one another, through which those higher influences, which ought to reach every corner, and every individual of the great structural humanity, may be freely carried everywhere, and no most remote or insignificant atom of the mass be totally and necessarily untouched.—*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*

Ver. 17. *Four kinds of apostles.*—There are four sorts of apostles, according to Jerome. 1. Some are sent only from God, and not by men. (1) Immediately from God the Father, as the prophets under the law (2 Pet. i. 21), Jesus Christ (John xx. 21), and the Baptist (John i. 6) in the beginning of the gospel. (2) Immediately from God the Son, in His state mortal, as the twelve (Matt. x. 5): in His state glorious, as St. Paul (Acts ix. 15). 2. Others are sent by men, and not

by God: as they who being unworthy both in respect of their bad learning and worse living, yet crowd into the ministry, by alliance, favour, or simony. 3. Others are neither chosen of God, nor called by men: as the false prophets (Jer. xxiii. 21; John x. 1). 4. Others are both chosen by God and called by men (Acts xx. 28, xiv. 23).

*Jesus calls us.*—1. O'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea. 2. From the worship of the vain world's golden store. 3. From each idol. 4. In our joys and sorrows, days of toil, and hours of ease.

*Fraternity.*—Christ loves not *singularity*; He called not *one* alone. He loves not *schism* either between them whom He calls; and therefore He calls persons likely to agree—"two brethren." So He began to build the synagogues, to establish that first government in Moses and Aaron—"brethren"; so He begins to build the Church in Peter and Andrew—"brethren." The principal fraternity and brotherhood that God respects is spiritual brethren in the profession of the same true religion (Exod. iv. 14; Eccles. iv. 9, 10).—*John Donne, D.D.*

*Association in work.*—Single endeavours seldom prosper: many hands make the work both quick and sure. They can be no friends to the happy estate of a family or Church that labour to cause distractions. Division makes certain way to ruin (Luke x. 1; Acts xi. 30, xiii. 2, xv. 2, 39, 40).—*Bishop Joseph Hall.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21—34.

(PARALLELS: LUKE iv. 31-41; MATT. viii. 14-17.)

*A Sabbath in Capernaum.*—I. Two places compete for the honour or shame of being the site of Capernaum. Tell Hum at the northern extremity, and Khan Minyeh at the north-western corner. 1. At the former there have been found the remains of a synagogue built of white marble, the style of which belongs to the Herodian period; and the following circumstance respecting it may be worthy of consideration. It appears to have been usual to carve over the doorway of these buildings an emblem, which, in every case known save one, was "the seven-branched candlestick," signifying that they were set apart



chiefly for illumination or instruction. The one exception is at Tell Hum, where the carving represents "the pot of manna" surrounded by a vine and cluster of grapes. Now it was in the synagogue at Capernaum that Christ delivered His discourse about the "manna" and the "living bread which came down from heaven"; and it has been conjectured, with some show of reason, that He who so frequently based His teaching on some object in sight at the time, may have brought the conversation round to this point on purpose, because the unusual emblem formed so happy an illustration of His subject. See John vi. 24-59. 2. Dr. Otts, a recent American traveller, writes as follows, in support of the claim of Khan Minyeh:—Without entering into the controversy, or presuming to dogmatise, we settle down on Khan Minyeh as the site of "His own city," in which was the Jesus-house, contemptuously called, in His day, by the unbelieving Jews, "the house of the heretic," and ever since known as such in tradition. In this city Jesus had a house. It is spoken of in the Gospels as "the house," and was doubtless known by His friends and foes as "the Jesus-house." It may have been a hired house, like that in which Paul lived and preached at Rome, engaged and maintained by His friends and followers as the place where He met with His disciples, and received all who sought the benedictions of His holy ministry. It seems that when He first went to Capernaum to make His home there, He lodged with Peter while this house was being procured and prepared for His use; and while staying in Peter's house, He healed his wife's mother of a fever, etc.

II. The **synagogue** was a term applied both to the congregation of Jews in a provincial town, and to the place where it assembled—on the Sabbath for worship, and during the week for instruction, discussion, and administration of justice. The origin of this institution is lost in obscurity. As far back as the time of Samuel there were meetings of bands of prophets for praise and prophesyings (1 Sam. x. 5, xix. 20), which pious Israelites would doubtless attend. In the days of the kings people resorted to the prophet of the time for instruction at certain seasons (2 Kings iv. 23). The only Old Testament mention of religious meeting-places other than places of sacrifice—if, indeed, the reference be not to religious feasts rather than religious houses—is in a Psalm (lxxiv. 8) of Maccabean date. Jewish tradition ascribes the establishment of synagogues to Ezra and Nehemiah. After the return from captivity they assumed a prominent place in the Jewish ecclesiastical system. The order of service was far less conventional than that of the Temple, distinguished strangers being frequently invited to read and expound (Acts xiii. 15). Thus the synagogue was a notable exception to the rigid formality which was sapping the life out of Judaism, and formed a rallying-point for the propagation of the Christian faith. Christ made constant use of the synagogue both for private devotion and for teaching purposes (Luke iv. 16).

III. The teaching of Christ in the synagogue at Capernaum struck His auditors with amazement, as it had done before at Nazareth (Luke iv. 14-30). It is not unlikely that He repeated now the substance of what He said then: declaring that His mission was to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord—the jubilee, in which God offers forgiveness of sins and deliverance to sinners; and that this blessing was for all, of whatever nation, who would turn from their sins and trust in God. To all this He may have added some of those imperishable sentences which were afterwards gathered up in the grand charter of the heavenly commonwealth which we call the Sermon on the Mount. Such teaching as this—at once so simple, so gracious, so comprehensive, so Divine—could not fail to create a sensation in the hearts of people

accustomed only to the pedantries and quibbles of the scribes, who only darkened counsel by words without knowledge. How had the commandment of God been emptied of all meaning by their puerile hair-splittings on every conceivable subject that bordered on religion without touching its inner essence! how had they bewildered the minds of the simple by their endless arguments and speculations and refinements, and by their wearisome appeals to this authority as against that! With Jesus it is altogether different. He moves on a plane as far above theirs as the heaven is higher than the earth. When He speaks, it is to utter truths that find their unmistakable echo in every human soul; when He teaches, it is to quote the opinion of no earthly authority, but to lay down the eternal law of right and wrong as Himself the Word of God. And what He preaches to others, He practises Himself; while He points, He also leads. Not so the scribes: they said "Go," but went not themselves.

**IV. A striking result** of Christ's preaching manifests itself immediately. The hush of awe which testified to the strong impression made by Christ's discourse in the synagogue, is abruptly disturbed by shrieks of rage and fear proceeding from one of the auditors who is manifestly under the dominion of the powers of evil. Here we are brought face to face with the profound and solemn problem of demoniacal possession. The phenomenon cannot be explained away by saying that our Lord merely accommodated His language to the mistaken ideas of the time, for we find that He deliberately made it part of His disciples' commission to "cast out demons" (Matt. x. 8), and afterwards gave thanks to the Father for their success in this part of their work (Luke x. 17, 18), while on another occasion He reproved them for having failed to expel an evil spirit (Matt. xvii. 21). We must, then, decline to identify these demons with mere physical and mental diseases—a theory which in any case would be insufficient to account for the double personality so manifest in nearly every instance on record, and conspicuously in the text, where at one moment the man, at another the demon, gains the ascendancy. In one of his better moments the poor wretch made his way to the synagogue, the very last place that the demon would willingly have permitted him to enter; but when there the demon, goaded to fury by the presence of Christ, asserts his supremacy over his victim, even while he fears that it will be to his own undoing. "Involuntarily, in his confessed inability of disguise or resistance, he owns defeat, even before the contest. 'What have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Thou art come to destroy us! I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.' And yet there seems already an emergence of the consciousness of the demonised, at least in so far that there is no longer confusion between him and his tormentor, and the latter speaks in his own name. One stronger than the demon had affected the higher part in the demonised. It was the Holy One of God, in whose presence the powers of moral destruction cannot be silent, but must speak, and own their subjection and doom. The Christ needs not to contend; that He is the Christ is itself victory. But this was not all. He had come not only to destroy the works of the devil. His Incarnation meant this—and more: to set the prisoners free. By a word of command He gagged the confessions of the demon, unwillingly made, and even so with hostile intent. It was not by such voices that He would have His Messiahship ever proclaimed. Such testimony was wholly unfitting and incongruous; it would have been a strange discord on the witness of the Baptist and the Voice which had proclaimed Him from heaven. The same power which gagged the confession also bade the demon relinquish his prey. One wild paroxysm—and the sufferer was for ever free." See Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus*, book iii., chap. xiv., for a thoroughly reverent and learned discussion of this difficult subject.

**V. The house of Simon and Andrew** is the next scene of our Lord's ceaseless

activity. On this memorable Sabbath a sudden attack of violent burning fever, such as is still common in that neighbourhood, had prostrated Simon's mother-in-law. That St. Peter was a married man, who continued to live with his wife after his call to the apostolic office, has been made the occasion of many a bitter gibe at the Roman See. But surely with great want of fairness, for the celibacy of the clergy is nothing more than a matter of discipline, one of those minor points which any branch of the Church has a right to exact from its ministers if there be reason to think God's work may thus be done more effectively. It is evident from 1 Cor. vii. that St. Paul was strongly in favour of celibacy, whenever and wherever possible, in the then condition of society; and the Roman See has simply applied to a particular class the general principle approved of by the apostle. In thus doing the Roman See may be acting wisely or unwisely — that is a question which must be decided entirely on its own merits; but the fact that St. Peter happened to be a married man has nothing whatever to do with it. St. Peter's wife is said to have been named Perpetua or Concordia, to have been a faithful convert, to have accompanied Peter in his apostolical journeys, and to have died a martyr for the faith of Christ during the persecution of Nero, her husband supporting her in the last struggle, and comforting her with the words, "O my wife, remember thy Lord who died for thee, that thou mightest gratefully shed thy blood for Him." Now to return to Peter's wife's mother. Our Lord, as soon as He is told of her illness, restores her by a touch. "He held the woman's hand to give life," says Petrus Chrysologus, "because Adam from a woman's hand had received death. He held her hand in order that what the hand of the presumptuous had lost, the hand of the Author might restore. He held her hand, that the hand might receive pardon which had plucked the sentence of death." And the cure is perfect. The woman who an instant before lay in a consuming fever rises as if from refreshing and invigorating sleep, and at once goes about her usual household duties, making the best possible use of her recovered health by ministering to the wants of Him who gave it.

**VI. The day's work is not yet over**; for the news of the Divine Benefactor's marvellous power has rapidly spread throughout the town, and there is a universal desire to profit by His presence among them. True, the Blessed Physician has a short respite, since it is the Sabbath, on which day journeys must not be taken and burdens must not be carried. But no sooner does the sinking sun proclaim the close of the Sabbath, than Christ's privacy is invaded by a surging mass of anxious people who have brought their sick and demonised friends to seek His aid, and of course their number is soon swelled by crowds of onlookers full of curiosity to witness the unwonted spectacle. "And all the city," says St. Mark, "was gathered together at the door": can we doubt that in this exclamation we have the very words of St. Peter, the master of the house, who at the time must have been puzzled to think what was best to do or how the multitude was to be got rid of? But it matters not to the Saviour — so utterly regardless of His own comfort and ease is He — how many there may be; for every emergency He is equally ready, to every cry for succour He makes the same response. "He cast out the spirits," St. Matthew tells us, "with His word, and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." What encouragement is here for all: for those "who are any ways afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate," to bring to Jesus all their woes; and for those who have friends or neighbours ignorant or heedless of the Saviour, to proclaim to them the blessed tidings of His pity and His love! But, alas! how little do we realise that Jesus can cure, and wishes to cure, *every* infirmity of our fallen nature — from the great fever of our sin-sick souls, down to the



hasty tempers and uncharitable thoughts which mar the characters of so many professing Christians, and yet cause them so little concern!

Vers. 23-26. *The plea of evil, and its rejection.*—I. **The plea of evil** (ver. 24).—1. It is the plea of personal evil. The carnal mind asserts its right to be, and insolently rages when confronted with the claims of truth and love and righteousness—rages most of all when confronted with the beauty of Jesus Christ. 2. It is the plea of public evil. The moment reformers attempt to deal with any social wrong, any pernicious institution, custom, trade, or law, they are attacked after this fashion. (1) Idolatry; (2) Slavery; (3) Intemperance; (4) Impurity. 3. And when evil dare not claim absolute immunity, it pleads for toleration and delay. “What have we,” etc. The last thing to be expected from evil is that it will tamely abdicate. Let us be sure that it never quits its hold until after struggles which shake to their foundations personal, social, and national life.

II. **Some characteristics of this plea.**—1. It is specious. The demon has closely identified himself with the human, and it is cleverly represented that the devil is the man’s friend, Christ his enemy, and whatsoever is done against the demon is done against the man. So blinded are the minds of them that believe not, that they regard an attack on the devil’s kingdom as an invasion of their own rights, a confiscation of their own riches. Wickedness is never friendly to anything that concerns the rights, safety, or enrichment of humanity, and when the devil becomes an advocate it is the wolf pleading for the lamb. 2. It is impudent. (1) This world is not the devil’s world, but God’s. The desert must apologise for itself, not the garden of spices; the black weed, not the lily or the rose; the cesspool, not the crystal river or the sea of glass. (2) In the development of this world the devil plays no essential part. Evil has no rights. 3. It is cruel (ver. 26). Can we let evil alone in ourselves—that which dims our eye, enervates our resolution, sears our conscience, destroys our affections, shatters our wing, blasts our hope? Can we for any consideration whatever let sin alone in our children? Sensitive as we are to their welfare, we cannot leave them a prey to the dark passions which destroy body and soul in hell. Can we let the heathen nations alone? Idolatry, infanticide, sutteeism, hook-swinging, slavery, cannibalism, are sufficiently terrible customs to let alone, and yet they are but a few red bubbles on a vast sea of sorrow whose depths God alone can sound. Are we to let alone the evils which afflict our own community? Intemperance, lust, war, tyranny, and other vices are filling our land with woes too deep for tears.

III. **Christ’s rejection of this plea.**—1. “Hold thy peace” (ver. 25). Here is the voice of contempt. Christ speaks to principalities and powers as to a dog. Where a spark of reality, sincerity, promise, existed, Christ was infinitely patient and sympathetic; but there was no place for argument here, because in pure wickedness there is no truth, no reason, no hope. 2. “Come out of him.” Here is the voice of authority.

**Lessons.**—1. Evil is to be cast out of humanity. The whisper of Christ prevails against all the wrath and rage and roar of hell. 2. Evil is to be wholly cast out. Nothing is rational in dealing with evil but the severity that breaks it off suddenly, that condemns it utterly, that pursues it to the death. 3. Evil is cast out in Christ.—*W. L. Watkinson.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 21, 22. *An authoritative Teacher and His audience.*—I. **An authoritative Teacher.**—1. Dignified in manner. 2. Original in matter. 3. Convincing in argument. 4. Consistent in practice.

II. **An astonished audience.**—They might well be astonished at—1. The range of His intellectual gifts. 2. The wealth and force of His illustrations. 3. His acquaintance with the human heart and conscience. 4. His deep knowledge of the Divine law.

Christ stood distinguished in these points among others from all the Rabbis who had been, or then were, in Israel. 1. The relation between His person and His word. The Teacher made the truth He taught. His teaching was His articulate person, His person His incorporated teaching. 2. The consciousness He had of Himself and His truth; its authority and creative energy. He was, at the first as at the last, at the last as at the first, certain of the reality of His words and claims, of their endurance and triumph. 3. His knowledge of His truth and mission was throughout perfect and self-consistent. His progress was not a series of tentative efforts, of mended mistakes, but an orderly movement to a consciously conceived end.

Ver. 22. *Christ's independence of thought.*—It was as if an English judge, instead of implicitly following precedents in all his decisions, were to discard any reference to even the most weighty, and speak, it might be, in direct opposition to them. No judicial luminary dares or dreams of such a thing, his greatest audacity leading him no further than to venture on some timid advance in a new deduction from earlier "Cases."—*C. Geikie, D.D.*

*The failure of the scribes as teachers.*—The scribes failed, first, in the *matter*; they delivered not the doctrine of God: secondly, in the *manner*; they taught coldly and without zeal: thirdly, in the *end*; they taught in

pride and ambition, seeking their own and not God's glory.—*E. Leigh.*

*Teaching enforced by personal religious character.*—While the scribes leaned upon the authority of others, and quoted chapter and verse for all they taught, Jesus spoke straight out from Himself the truth that was embodied in His own life, leaving it to find an echo in the hearts of the truth-loving and God-revering. His teaching impressed itself upon the populace, mainly because it was backed up by a personal religious character; the teaching of the scribes failed mainly because it lacked this—because they did not in their own lives act out what they taught. The one thing essential above all else is to be ourselves living the truth that we desire others to embrace. It has been reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shewn itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may truly be said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists.—*W. E. H. Lecky.*

*Teaching with authority.*—1. Men will teach well only as they teach under Christ. 2. Authority is impossible apart from association with the Master. 3. Authority of tone must come from intensity of conviction. 4. Hearers know the voice of authority. 5. The Christian teacher is to show his supremacy over all other teachers.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Ver. 23. *Unclean spirits.*—I do not see anything in the history of those spirits, or of the persons possessed by them, which should lead to the use

of the epithet "unclean" in any such sense as we should think of assigning to the word. If we could imagine the evil spirits or demons thus represented as wandering on earth to be the impure spirits who left their own habitations, we might perhaps suppose that they were characterised and described, not by the acts of their vagrant humiliation, but by the sin that had led to it. This, however, does not seem to be consistent with the idea of their custody; and I am more inclined to believe that the uncleanness, or impurity, relates to their mixed nature; not purely human, or angelic.—*S. R. Maitland, D.D.*

"*In an unclean spirit.*"—There is dreadful meaning in the preposition here used—"a man *in* an unclean spirit," as if his human self was immersed in that filthy flood. The words embody three thoughts: the fierce hatred which disowns all connexion with Jesus; the wild terror which asks or affirms Christ's destructive might over all foul spirits; and the recognition of Christ's holiness, which lashes unholiness into a paroxysm of mingled despair and hate.—*A. Mac-laren, D.D.*

*Demoniac possession* is not an organic or bodily disorder, a kind of hallucination or mental alienation, or one of the nervous affections, as rationalist critics have pretended in defiance of the Scripture; it is a particular condition of the mind, a psychological disorder. The presence of a demon in certain men neither absorbs nor yet destroys their personality. The individuality is indestructible and inviolable. God Himself, who could destroy everything, as He has created everything, destroys nothing and does not allow destruction. The most violent Satanic action only affects the organic and lower faculties, the imagination and the senses of the unfortunate victims; their freewill may be enchained for a moment, but only when voluntarily surrendered. The man possessed of a demon is under the dominion of a spirit which tyrannises

over him, suspends or fetters his liberty, deprives him of the normal control of his body and limbs, speaks by his mouth and deranges his feelings. The abnormal state of his faculties is not due to an unhealthy condition of the brain or to organic disturbances; it is born of the violent and disturbing action of a superior will; it is a result and not a cause. Hence the healing of one possessed is beyond the power of medicine; it can only be effected by the moral influence of one spirit on another. It is true that actual illness, as a rule, accompanied demoniac possession. Certain senses were often paralysed; the man possessed of a demon could not see, could not speak; he was subject to convulsions or epileptic fits; but we have no authority to confound these maladies with the possession itself. All that we can say, after the closest examination of the texts, is that the mischief introduced into the organic life of the victim may have been originated by the violent action of the spirit which tormented him: so intimate is the connexion between mind and body, that organic disturbances lead to mental troubles, just as mental troubles engender organic disorders.—*Father Didon.*

Ver. 24. *The spiritually disturbed consciousness* a figure of the curse of sin—1. In its destruction and contradictions. 2. In its restraint. 3. In its despair. 4. But also in its dim feeling of its misery and of the coming of its Saviour.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*The characteristics of the wicked.*—1. Knowledge without love. 2. Hatred to Christ, and withal flattering acknowledgment. 3. Pride even to madness, and yet impotent fear and flight.—*Ibid.*

*The antithesis of heaven and hell.*—1. Peace of soul, and passion (the devil assaults first). 2. Collectedness, and distraction. 3. The spirit of mercy, and the spirit of torment. 4. Dignity, and degradation. 5. Victory, and prostration.—*Ibid.*

*The name "Jesus of Nazareth" given*



to Christ—1. By early disciples (John i. 45). 2. By the demons. 3. By the multitude (Mark x. 47). 4. By the soldiers (John xviii. 5, 7). 5. By the high-priest's servant (Mark xiv. 67). 6. By Pilate (John xix. 19). 7. By the angel at the sepulchre (Mark xvi. 6). 8. By the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 19). 9. By Peter (Acts ii. 22, iii. 6, iv. 10, x. 38). 10. By Christ Himself after the Ascension (Acts xxii. 8).

Vers. 25, 26. *The unclean spirit silenced*.—1. An evidence of Christ's Divine commission. 2. A proof of Christ's goodwill to men. 3. A declaration of the great object of Christ's incarnation—to destroy the works of the devil. 4. An indication of Christ's determination to refuse all quarter to the minions of hell. One cannot believe that His rejection of their testimony was prudential only, whatever possibility there may have been of that charge of complicity which was afterwards formulated. The thought of allowing Himself to be indebted to them for help of any kind would be most abhorrent to Him. And must He not still regard as contamination every truce with evil of whatever kind—every gain accruing to His cause by fraud, injustice, or suppression of the truth?

Ver. 27. *Cured by a word*.—What caused such astonishment was not so much the fact itself, as the way in which it was performed. Such cures, it seems, were not unknown to the Jews, but they were due to the virtue of the prayers, sacred formula, incantations, and invocations of their exorcists, and, probably, more often to the accommodation of the spirits themselves. Jesus did not appeal to any extraneous force, He only had to speak one word; He commanded, and the unclean spirit passed out subdued, ejected by a superior will.—*Father Didon*.

Vers. 30, 31. *Christ wrought*

*miracle to relieve Himself from the common burdens of humanity*.—These indeed pressed the heavier upon Him because He uplifted their weight from other men; and it is in his narrative of this very day's events that St. Matthew applies this principle to His mastery over disease (viii. 17). All the more, He relieved with especial promptness the distresses of those who were near to Him—of His hosts when their wine failed, of His followers threatened by hunger, of His disciples alone upon the waters, of those whom He loved in Bethany. Thus He was, in temporal as in spiritual trouble, the Saviour of all men, yet especially of them who believe. And therefore He is prompt to respond to this appeal for one whom He must have known, and whom His disciples evidently loved—an appeal at once so fervent and so delicate, so free from dictation, that it was equally well characterised as "beseeching Him" and as "telling Him of her."—*Dean Chadwick*.

*Personal compassion*.—The same character is to be recognised in the spiritual work of Jesus, even to this day. It is still a personal compassion which cools the worse and deadlier fevers of the soul; still when invoked He bends over us, and our healing is due to no mechanical grace, but to His own direct act of love; and still it is ours, when healed, to minister to Him and to His people.—*Ibid*.

*Contact with the individual*.—1. The individual case as well as the case of the multitude should be regarded as worthy of attention. 2. Bodily diseases as well as spiritual ailments are within the sphere of our solicitude; we are to be philanthropic as well as spiritually-minded. 3. We are to put ourselves in personal contact with those who suffer.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Ver. 34. *Christ's miracles of healing* may be regarded—1. As proofs of His Divine mission, Messiahship, and Godhead. (1) They were such as no man could have wrought without direct aid from heaven. (2) They were

such as the prophets had predicted would be wrought by the Messiah (Isa. liii. 4, xxxv. 5, 6, etc.). (3) They were wrought with an air of authority such as no mere man would dare arrogate to himself. 2. As a means of overcoming prejudice, and so securing a favourable reception for His message. His attention to their bodily interests, and His success in dealing with physical maladies, induced men to believe in His solicitude for the welfare of the soul, and to have confidence in the spiritual treatment He prescribed. 3. As an encouragement to believing prayer. Christ is as really in our midst to-day, as He was that Sabbath in Capernaum; and He is every whit as ready to sympathise and as able to succour. But He cannot work for us

and with us and in us, unless we trust Him implicitly and without reservation of any kind. "Lord, increase our faith!" 4. As examples for our imitation. The whole apparatus now at work for the relief of suffering and for the care of sufferers—hospitals and infirmaries, asylums and homes—is the direct fruit of Christianity. Does it not become us, according to our ability and opportunity, to give such institutions our cordial support? Innumerable cases of suffering and disease come constantly before us. While we carry the sufferers in the arms of faith and prayer to God, let us do what we can to alleviate their pains by self-denying effort, and so prove that our prayers are the outpouring of tender, sympathising hearts.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. - Verses 35—39.

(PARALLELS: MATT. viii. 16, 17, iv. 23-25; LUKE iv. 40-44.)

*The mutual relations of prayer and work.*—Hitherto St. Mark has depicted in glowing colours the untiring activity of Him who "went about doing good" among men, instructing their ignorance, removing their woes, and infusing new hope into their burdened hearts. Now he fills up the picture with a view of Jesus in solitary communion with His Father, lifting up His eyes unto the heavenly hills from whence came His daily inspiration and motive-power.

I. *Christ's prayers in general.*—Eighteen times our Lord's own prayers are spoken of in the Gospels, bringing out the following facts respecting them. 1. His habit of prayer (Matt. xiv. 23; Mark i. 35, vi. 46; Luke iii. 21, v. 16, vi. 12, ix. 28, xi. 1). 2. His blending of thanksgiving with prayer (Matt. xi. 25; Luke x. 21; John xi. 41). 3. His use of intercession in prayer. (1) For friends (Luke xxii. 32). (2) For enemies (Luke xxiii. 34). (3) For Himself and His disciples as one with Him (John xvii.). (4) His complete submission to the Father's will (Matt. xxvi. 39; Mark xv. 34; Luke xxii. 42; John xii. 27).

II. *Christ's prayer on this occasion.*—1. The time selected—"the morning, a great while before day." No time could be more favourable for private communion with God—the body refreshed by its recent repose, the mind in its vigour, the passions at rest, the whole surroundings so calm and tranquil. The saints in every age have loved to give their freshest thoughts to God, and to seek His aid before the duties of the day begin. 2. The scene—"a solitary place." Besides taking delight in the common prayers of the Church, and lifting up the heart secretly even in the most public thoroughfares, the man of God has his private oratory, into which he enters and shuts the door, and pours forth his soul in the presence of his Heavenly Father, laying bare his most secret feelings, confessing his inmost faults, making known his every trouble and desire. 3. Our Lord sets us here a notable example of prayer in spite of hindrances. After so laborious a day as that just closed, and with the prospect of another equally trying, the Saviour must have sorely needed rest. But aching limbs and weary

mind are to Him as nothing in comparison with the longing of His pure and holy spirit for the refreshing streams of heavenly grace. And so, giving but few hours to sleep, He rises long before daybreak to pray.

**III. Prayer and work.** With Christ these two things were always closely associated. Prayer was to Him the sequel of one day's work, and the prelude of another. He will not on any account forego His daily devotions; but, on the other hand, He will not let them interfere with His work for God. There are some who think they may be excused from prayer because they are so busy; and others who think that God will be pleased with prayer in lieu of work, as the sole business of their lives; but the example of Christ rebukes all such trifling. It is only in combination that either prayer or work will gain the Divine approval, and draw down a blessing on ourselves and others. It is related of Colonel Gardiner that he used constantly to rise at four in the morning, and spend his time till six in private meditation and prayer, in which he acquired such fervency of spirit as, says his biographer, "I believe few men living ever attained. This certainly very much contributed to strengthen that firm faith in God, and reverent, animating sense of His presence, for which he was so eminently remarkable, and which carried him through the trials and services of life with such readiness and with such activity; for he indeed endured and acted as if always seeing Him who is invisible. If at any time he was obliged to go out before six in the morning, he rose proportionally sooner; so that, when a journey or a march has required him to be on horseback by four, he would be at his devotions by two." There is a sentimentalism abroad which says, "Work is prayer." So it is. And yet if we work without secret and constant prayer our work will be powerless. Work is only prayer in so far as it is done in a prayerful spirit. There must be distinct work and distinct prayer. We must pray in order to work, and work because we pray.

Vers. 36-38. *Jesus in request.* 1. Though Jesus had withdrawn, the interest and excitement created by His miracles continued in Capernaum (ver. 37).--- 1. His miracles had taken the form of temporal benefits. They might look for more of these. 2. His miracles might prompt them to take Him by force, and make Him a king. 3. Erroneous notions of Christ still lead many to follow Him. (1) Some, like the Jews, seek temporal advantages. (2) Some come for the pardon of retained sins. (3) Some come to purchase salvation by the performance of ceremonies. (4) Some come to accompany others.

II. Such interest seems to have gratified the apostles (ver. 36). - 1. They loved their Master, and rejoiced in His praise. 2. They shared in the reputation of their Master. 3. They went to Christ, thinking to gratify Him. 4. They went to Christ, perhaps supposing that He would take advantage of His popularity to set up His kingdom. 5. They seem to have gone to induce Him to return to Capernaum. 6. Gratification with the world's favour indicates a low standard in a believer or a Church.

III. Christ refused to return to Capernaum, on the ground that He had to preach elsewhere (ver. 38).---1. In so far as the people of Capernaum were concerned; (1) He had preached to them the gospel. (2) He had confirmed His doctrine by miracles. (3) He would not gratify a vain curiosity. (4) He would not work miracles merely to confer a temporal good. (5) Let us examine our motives for asking Christ's presence. 2. He had to preach the gospel to others. (1) He was the King of the Jews, not the ruler of a city. (2) He was the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, not the pastor of a congregation. (3) The Jews were to be dealt with nationally in judgment, and therefore nationally in mercy. (4) Let Christ still preach everywhere. (5) Let us not limit Christ's presence.—*Jas. Stewart.*



## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 35. *Christ's habit of prayer.*—Some have stumbled at the Saviour's habit of prayer, as though it derogated from His Divine character that He should make petitions to God: they have explained it by saying that He prayed not from want, but for example's sake. But away with such explanations: let us embrace the mystery; let us not care to explain it; and let us say, as we may say without passing the bounds of truth and without detracting an iota from our Saviour's glory, that being perfect man He did that which perfect man ever ought to do—namely, find His chief joy and His chief source of support in communion with His Father in heaven.—*Bishop H. Goodwin.*

*Prayer before work.*—Our Lord in all His great works commenced with prayer. The same religious habit was common with the heathen. In all undertakings of moment they began with consulting or propitiating the gods: not only if they were about to engage in any expedition, or to encounter an enemy, or to form a treaty; but scarcely is there to be found a poem of any length in which the aid or inspiration of some reputed divinity is not invoked. It was reserved for the Christian—the disciple of Jesus, the decrifier and improver of Gentile fashions—to discard prayer from his breast and home. It is the Christian by name that enters on matters of the first importance to his country, his neighbour, or himself, that ventures upon the thousand perils and hazards which threaten his health, fortune, and comfort by day, and the secret evils which walk by night, and all without prayer; often, without a single aspiration to Him whose providence noteth even a sparrow's fall, and in whose hands are the issues of our weal and woe. What wonder if God forsake those who never acknowledge their dependence on Him, but on the contrary habitually demean themselves as if they were the sole or chief contrivers and builders of their fortunes!—*A. Williams, M.A.*

Ver. 37. *All men seek for Christ.*—All ages and all lives have sought for Christ. The prophecy that bespeaks Him is no mere feature of the Jewish Scriptures. It is part of the equipment of the human heart. Messianic prophecy is the deepest department of psychology. The search for Christ is the profoundest fact of human life. Every life that has any moral value seeks for something by the aid of which it can rise above itself, of something which shall redeem it from its littleness, heal its sicknesses, answer its prophecies, and take its unrest away. In every human heart there is beneath all the carelessness and indifference the Christ-want—a want which men seek to satisfy in a thousand ways, or to forget in the whirl of life and the dissipation of trifles. Deep down in our mystic life—no matter how careless, or shallow, or slight we be—there is an unfulfilled prophecy for Jesus Christ. No man is so shallow, superficial, or bad as never to have felt in his heart of hearts, in those solemn hours that come to every man, the impulse of this prophecy. What else is the meaning of the hero-worship of bygone days but the declaration that man seeks a strength without, that each life is not self-sufficient, that it seeks for something perfectly holy, yet perfectly human, to which it can give itself up? The shrines of heroes and martyrs at which men and women have prayed—what are these but witness to the fact that human nature seeks its Christ, seeks by its worship of goodness or power to get back the goodness or the power it lacks? The whole travail of human life is its search for Christ; the pathos of life is the pursuit of the false Christs; the equation of life is solved, the prophecies of life fulfilled, when the soul finds its Christ—when the soul of man returns to its rest in God.

*The true disciple always knows where to find the Master.*—The disciples knew the habits of their Lord: they knew

that in some hidden place He could be found in the early hours of the day; at all events, they knew that Jesus Christ would be found in the path of usefulness or preparation for usefulness. Do men know where they can find *us*? Are our Christian habits so distinct and unchangeable that our friends can with certainty explain our position?—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Ver. 38. *Christ's eagerness to reach as many souls as possible.*—He will not wait for people to come to Him, but hastens to carry the gospel to them. Thus He teaches us to make the most of our lives and opportunities, to scatter the seed of grace as widely as we can, to press forward with the tidings of God's love with unflagging zeal.

*The preaching of the kingdom of God was Christ's vocation.*—1. Concerning Himself, as He who was come to save men. 2. Concerning the true righteousness which avails before God. 3. Concerning the worship of God in

spirit and truth. Within these limits it was His vocation to spread that kingdom as far as He could.—*F. Schleiermacher.*

"*Therefore came I forth.*"—Christ does not mean that for this end He had come into the world, but that for this end He had come during the night from His house to the spot where He had been composed and tranquillised; and not that such was the intention with which He had come hither, but that such was the Divine purpose in His coming—that He had been brought hither to be composed and tranquillised, not for Himself, not for His personal benediction, but to be prepared and equipped for further ministry; that He had found comfort in the solitude, only to enable Him to be a Comforter. This is the true Christ-spirit, the feeling that nothing is given to us for ourselves, but for our helpful effluence thereof; that the *raison d'être* for all we have and are is service, sacrifice.—*S. A. Tappan.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 40–45.

(PARALLELS: MATT. viii. 2-4; LUKE v. 12-16.)

*A parable in a miracle.*—Christ's miracles are called wonders—that is, deeds which, by their exceptional character, arrest attention and excite surprise. Further, they are called "mighty works"—that is, exhibitions of superhuman power. They are still further called "signs"—that is, tokens of His Divine mission. But they are signs in another sense, being, as it were, parables as well as miracles, and representing on the lower plane of material things the effects of His working on men's spirits. This parabolic aspect of the miracles is obvious in the case before us. Leprosy received exceptional treatment under the Mosaic Law, and the peculiar restrictions to which the sufferer was subjected, as well as the ritual of his cleansing, in the rare cases where the disease wore itself out, are best explained by being considered as symbolical rather than as sanitary. It was taken as an emblem of sin. Its hideous symptoms, its rotting sores, its slow, stealthy, steady progress, its defiance of all known means of cure, made its victim only too faithful a walking image of that worse disease.

1. *The leper's cry.*—Mark connects the story with our Lord's first journey through Galilee, which was signalised by many miracles, and had excited much stir and talk. The news of the Healer had reached the isolated huts where the lepers herded, and had kindled a spark of hope in one poor wretch, which emboldened him to break through all regulations and thrust his tainted and unwelcome presence into the shrinking crowd. Mark's vivid narrative shows him to us, flinging himself down before the Lord, and, without waiting for question or pause, interrupting whatever was going on with his piteous cry.

Misery and wretchedness make short work of conventional politenesses. Note the keen sense of misery that impels to the passionate desire for relief. A leper with the flesh dropping off his bones could not suppose that there was nothing the matter with him. The parallel fails us there. The emblem is all insufficient, for here is the very misery of our deepest misery, that we are unconscious of it, and sometimes even come to love it. The worse we are, the less we know that there is anything the matter with us; and the deeper the leprosy has struck its filthy fangs into us, the more ready we are to say that we are sound. Oh! if the best of us could see himself for once, in the light of God, as the worst of us will see himself one day, the cry would come from the purest lips, "O wretched man that I am! who will deliver me from the body of this death?" this life in death that I carry, rotting and smelling foul to heaven, about with me, wheresoever I go. Note, further, this man's confidence in Christ's power. "Thou canst make me clean." He had heard all about the miracles that were being wrought up and down over the country, and he came to the Worker, with nothing of the nature of religious faith in him, but with entire confidence, based upon the report of previous miracles, in Christ's ability to heal. If we turn from the emblem to the thing signified, from the leprosy of the body to that of the spirit, we may be sure of Christ's omnipotent ability to cleanse from the extreme severity of the disease, however inveterate and chronic it may have become. Sin dominates men by two opposite lies. I have been saying how hard it is to get people's consciences awakened to see the facts of their moral and religious condition; but then, when they are awoke up, it is almost as hard to keep them from the other extreme. The devil, first of all, says to a man, "It is only a little one. Do it; you will be none the worse. You can give it up when you like, you know." That is the language before the act. Afterwards, his language is, first, "You have done no harm; never mind what people say about sin. Make yourself comfortable." And then, when that lie wears itself out, the mask is dropped, and this is what is said: "I have got you now, and you cannot get away. Done is done! What thou hast written thou hast written; and neither thou nor anybody else can blot it out." Hence the despair into which awakened consciences are apt to drop, and the feeling, which dogs the sense of evil like a spectre, of the hopelessness of all attempts to make oneself better. Brethren, they are both lies: the lie that we are pure is the first; the lie that we are too black to be purified is the second. Christ's blood atones for all past sin, and has power to bring forgiveness to every one. Christ's vital Spirit will enter into any heart, and, abiding there, has power to make the foulest clean. Note, again, the leper's hesitation: "If Thou wilt." He had no right to presume on Christ's goodwill. He knew nothing about the principles upon which His miracles were wrought and His mercy extended. But his hesitation is quite as much entreaty as hesitation. He, as it were, throws the responsibility for his health or disease upon Christ's shoulders, and thereby makes the strongest appeal to that loving heart. We stand on another level. The leper's hesitation is our certainty. We know that if any men are not healed it is not because Christ will not, but because they will not.

**II. The Lord's answer.**—Mark puts the miracle in very small compass, and dilates rather upon the attitude and mind of Christ preparatory to it. Note three things—the compassion, the touch, the word. As to the first, is it not a precious gift for us, in the midst of our many wearinesses and sorrows and sicknesses, to have that picture of Jesus Christ bending over the leper, and sending, as it were, a gush of pitying love from His heart to flood away all his miseries? Show Him sorrow, and He answers it by a pity of such a sort that it is restless till it helps and assuages. We may rise higher than even this, for the pity of Jesus Christ is the summit of His revelation of the Father. The



Christian's God is no impassive Being, indifferent to mankind, but One who in all our afflictions is afflicted, and, in His love and in His pity, redeems and bears and carries. Note, still further, the Lord's touch. With swift obedience to the impulse of His pity, Christ thrusts forth His hand and touches the leper. There was much in that; but whatever more we may see in it, we should not be blind to the loving humanity of the act. All men that help their fellows must be contented thus to identify themselves with them and to take them by the hand, if they would deliver them from their evils. Remember, too, that according to the Mosaic Law it was forbidden to any but the priest to touch a leper. Therefore in this act, beautiful as it is in its uncalculated humanity, there may have been something intended of a deeper kind. Our Lord thereby does one of two things—either He asserts His authority as overriding that of Moses and all his regulations, or He asserts His sacerdotal character. Either way there is a great claim in the act. Still further, we may take that touch of Christ's as being a parable of His whole work. It symbolises His identifying of Himself with mankind, the foulest and the most degraded; and in this connexion there is a profound meaning in one of the ordinarily trivial legends of the Rabbis, who, founding upon a word of Isa. liii., tell us that when Messiah comes He will be found sitting amongst the lepers at the gate of the city. So He was numbered amongst the transgressors in His life, and “with the wicked in His death.” He touches, and, touching, contracts no impurity, cleansing as the sunlight or the fire does, by burning up the impurity, and not by receiving it into Himself. Note the Lord's word: “I will; be thou clean.” It is shaped, convolution for convolution, so to speak, to match the man's prayer. He ever moulds His response according to the feebleness and imperfection of the petitioner's faith. But, at the same time, what a ring of autocratic authority and conscious sovereignty there is in the brief, calm, imperative word, “I will; be thou clean”! He accepts the leper's description of power; He claims to work the miracle by His own will, and therein He is either guilty of what comes very near arrogant blasphemy, or He is rightly claiming for Himself a Divine prerogative. If His word can tell as a force on material things, what is the conclusion? He who “speaks and it is done” is Almighty and Divine.

**III. The immediate cure.**—Mark tells, with his favourite word, “straightway,” how, as soon as Christ had spoken, the leprosy departed from him. And to turn from the symbol to the fact, the same sudden and complete cleansing is possible for us. On account of Christ's sacrifice, whose efficacy is eternal and lies at the foundation of all our blessedness and our purity until the heavens shall be no more, we are forgiven our sins, and our guilt is taken away. By the present indwelling of that cleansing Spirit of the ever-living Christ, which will be given to us each if we seek it, we are cleansed day by day from our evil. We must come to Christ, and there must be a real living contact between us and Him through our faith, if we are to possess either the forgiveness or the cleansing which is wrapped up inseparable in His gift. Further, the suddenness of this cure and its completeness may be reproduced in us. Trust Him and He will do it. Only remember, it was of no use to the leper that crowds had been healed, that floods of blessing had been poured over the land. What he wanted was that a rill should come into his own garden and flow past his own door and refresh his own lips. And if you want to have Christ's cleansing you must make personal work of it, and come with this prayer, “Unto *me* be all that cleansing shown!” Or rather you do not need to go to Him with an “If” nor a prayer, for His gift has not waited for our asking, and He has anticipated us by coming with healing in His wings. The parts are reversed, and He prays *you* to receive the gift, and stands before each of us with the gentle remon-

strance upon His lips, "Why will ye die when I am here ready to cure you?" Take Him at His word, for He offers to us all, whether we desire it or no, the cleansing which we need.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Vers. 40-45. *Christ's healing touch*.—What purpose did the touch of Christ serve? Perhaps we shall be helped in replying, if we think of how much tenderness and pathos the Gospel narratives would be deprived if this small feature were taken from them. The touch of Christ seems still to bring Him into contact with humanity; it falls into harmony with the whole story of His condescending sympathy.

**I. In touching the sick Christ fixes and confirms faith in Himself as the Healer.**—It is in condescension to a human weakness that He lays His hands on diseased folk. We believe in little that we cannot see. Pain and sickness are so sensible that we look for equally sensible tokens of the energy of the restorer. Christ came into the world to heal sicknesses; and faith in Him, as Healer, was essential to the cure. By His touch He fixed men's thoughts upon Himself; this was the pledge of healing by which He stimulated and confirmed their faith. Christ's touching the sick is then a symbol of that condescension to our weakness in which He still appeals to us, fixing our thoughts upon Himself, revealing His infinite power and ever-gracious purpose, arousing us by some special mode to contemplate what virtue is in Him, but which, without these special revelations, we should fail to see. Miracles themselves are such a condescension; in the miracle Christ "*touches*" us, that we may see how entirely and blessedly the universe is under His control. We may see this, too, as one among the reasons of Christ's incarnation—"the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," that "touched" into attention we might behold "the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Christ was in God, before God was incarnated in Jesus Christ. The love and sympathy, the reverence and righteousness, the trustiness and truth—in one word, the grace that so moves and wins us in Jesus, dwelt in the bosom of the Father from before all worlds. But how could we have ascended up on high to bring Christ down from above? how could our world-dulled eyes have beheld, or our carnal hearts have trusted, the grace that is in our God? It needed to be not simply revealed to us as a heavenly doctrine, but embodied in an earthly form. And so it "drew from out the vast, and struck its being into bounds." Christian experience, again, will furnish us with many illustrations of the mode in which Christ condescends to our weakness in pursuing His purpose to save us. We none of us believe that there are times and seasons with Him. He is as ready to save us the first hour we hear of Him as He can be at any subsequent time; He "waiteth" to be gracious unto us, with hand ever stretched out, and with voice ever pleading, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." And yet how full is Christian biography of instances of Christ's falling in with our expectation and using special events, special times, as the mode in which to heal us. The cares of life, the responsibilities of early manhood, the solemnity of parentage, the softening influences of bereavement, the terrors of pestilence, the fear of death—He makes all these the means of extending His grace to souls. He gives us the very sign we wish for, that we may believe that He is Himself making us whole.

**II. See in Christ's touch of the sick His answer to our craving for sympathy.**—Those who have had much to do with the sick—who have seen how, in their tossings to and fro, a hand laid on theirs can quiet them—who have heard them say, "Sit there in the light, where I can see you"—who remember their restless craving for some token that they are being cared for, how they ask to be turned from side to side, that their pillow be smoothed, or the curtains drawn, or some

little attention paid which makes their bed really no easier, but soothes them—will see in the touch of Christ a virtue beyond what it has as the appropriate sign of healing. They will understand that this token of sympathy had much to do with the faith in Himself as Healer, which Christ sought to cherish; for the sick have very little confidence in the power to help them of those who are not tender in their help. Some of us would do well to visit the sick, that we might learn what possibilities of suffering are in man, and be made more thoughtful, more tender-hearted. There was no need of Christ's learning such a lesson, no need of awakening His sympathy. But we did need to have that sympathy revealed to us. And here, again, we are met by the wondrous doctrine of the Incarnation. Christ is with us, not only helping us, but feeling with us; knowing exactly how to succour, because He knows exactly how the burden presses on us. How the gospel lights up and fills with meaning such passages as these: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are but dust." "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." Man's craving for God's sympathy is here met, the very craving we are sometimes ready to stigmatise as a weakness. "They brought unto Christ infants, that He should touch them; but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them." "What good can a touch do them? Silly mothers to long for, to find any satisfaction in a touch!" But Jesus rebuked His disciples, and took the children in His arms and blessed them. There are very many things that, like the touch of the children, do not seem to us of much use, but still we are weak enough to long for them. And we have a Father in heaven who is good enough to meet that weakness. Christ has made us understand the Fatherhood of God. He would have us not stiffly, severely good, but frank and natural with Him. The touch was not needed for healing, but it was a comfort to be touched by Christ; and "Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, and said, I will; be thou clean."

III. See in Christ's touch the symbol of Christ's bearing our infirmities and carrying our sins. This is, after all, the sublimest meaning of our text. He "*touched*," our nature in all its pollution; He shrank not from it, but took it upon Himself, and bore its shame and suffering. A thousand will subscribe to a hospital for one who will live with the idiot or deformed; a thousand will pay the doctor and the nurse for one who will enter the cottage of the squalid sick and spend one night there. It needs much schooling of self to suppress the instinct of revolt at sickness hideously before us. Turn now and read of Christ, that He "*touched*" the sick and healed them. You will see that in His dealing with bodily disease He did but symbolise how entirely He had taken human sinfulness to Himself.—*A. Mackennal, D.D.*

Vers. 43-45. *Be silent.* 1. This is not at all the command we should have expected; and we cannot but ask, therefore, for the reason of it. Can it be that a very common conception of Christian duty is after all inaccurate and misleading, and that it is *not* every convert's first and great duty to bear verbal witness to the Saviour who has redeemed him? It may be that this is an inaccurate and a misleading conception of Christian duty; and for myself I think it is. But, assuredly, there were other reasons for our Lord's prohibition; and it may be well to look at these first. 1. Doubtless one reason why Christ enjoined silence on many of those whom He had healed was, that He did not as yet wish to draw on Himself the public attention. He came not to strive, and cry, and make His voice heard in the streets. He desired to go quietly about His work, sowing seeds of truth and grace which might hereafter bring forth fair fruit abundantly. 2. Another and more special reason in this case was, that He wished the leper to discharge a special duty, viz. to bear a



"testimony to the priests." As yet they were prejudiced against Jesus of Nazareth. They thought of Him as a zealot, a fanatic, who had swept away corruptions at which they had connived, by which they had profited. Probably they feared that He might set Himself to destroy, rather than to fulfil, the Mosaic Law, or that He might undermine their authority with the people. Now if the leper had done as he was bid, if he had held his peace, if he had gone straight to Jerusalem and told the priests that Jesus had sent him to them in order that they might examine him by the Mosaic tests and say whether he was clean, and if he had taken them the offerings which Moses had commanded the cleansed leper to present before the Lord, he would have carried them "a testimony" which could hardly have failed to produce a happy effect on their minds. First, his very healing would have testified that Jesus wielded a Divine power, and then the deference of Jesus to the law and to the priesthood would have predisposed them in His favour. 3. But besides these, we cannot but feel that there must be some reason in our common human nature for this constant injunction to silence, that our Lord must have been thinking of the spiritual welfare of men when He forbade them to bear public witness to His marvellous works. One such reason is to be found, I think, in the very different estimate put on miracles by Christ and by the Church. It is only of late years that the more thoughtful students of the Word have come to suspect that miracles are a burden which the gospel has to carry rather than wings of proof which bear it up. But however *we* may regard them, our Lord and His apostles laid very little stress upon them. To the leper, possibly, nothing was so grand, nothing so desirable, as the power to work miracles; but Jesus knew "a more excellent way," and held not love alone, but almost any ethical and spiritual virtue, to be worth far more than tongues, or prophecy, or the faith that can only remove a mountain. For this reason, therefore, among many others, He bade the leper "say nothing" of the miracle "to any man." Consider, too, how religious emotion evaporates in talk, how virtue goes out of us in the words we utter. Is it not always better to obey than to talk about obedience, to show love than to profess love? Obviously, though no doubt he thought to honour Christ by "much publishing" what He had done, this man was not strong enough for that form of service. To what good end did he honour Christ with his tongue, while he dishonoured, by disobeying, Him in his life? See what harm this leper did, though doubtless he had none but a good intention, what an ill return he made for the grace of Christ. By touching the leper Christ had become a leper, in the eye of the law. The kind hand laid upon him not only healed him, but drew him from the desert into the city, and readmitted him to the society of men. And the leper rewarded his Healer by driving Him out of the city into the desert. Simply because his foolish tongue would wag, "Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, but was" compelled to remain "without in desert places." Could we have a more convincing illustration of the danger of disobedience, however pure and generous its motive may seem? Yes, for it is a still more bitter proof when we find that by our own fluent religious talk, and the easy but eager profession by which we honestly meant to serve Christ, we have alienated from Him those who stand nearest to us and know us best.

II. **How came this leper to disobey the word of the Lord?**—This ought not to be a puzzle to you, and could not be if you were thoughtful students of your own hearts. Have you yet to learn that it is much easier to brace oneself for great endeavours than to maintain a faithful discharge of simple and lesser duties? easier to suffer death, for example, in some great cause than to set such a watch over the lips as never to offend? easier to make a great sacrifice for some worthy end than to keep one's temper under the slight frets and provo-

cations which every day brings with it? A great faith is not always a patient and submissive faith. We should also remember into what fatal languors great spiritual excitement is apt to react. The leper who, face to face with Christ, could live or die for Him, but no sooner quits His presence than he cannot even hold his tongue for Him, is but a glass in which we may see ourselves and read a warning against our own peril.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 40. *Various attitudes of men towards Christ.*—In ver. 27 we found men putting questions regarding Christ's power; in ver. 40 we find a poor sufferer seeking to avail himself of Christ's curative energy. This marks the great difference between various classes of society in relation to the work of the Saviour. One class is content with looking, wondering, and perhaps admiring; another class must test His power in direct personal experience.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*Christ inspires trust.*—This incident shows the *trust* which the ministry of the Saviour had inspired in the minds of sufferers, specially so in the case of the leper; the leper lived under the most terrible restrictions, yet his heart rose to the point of trust and love when he heard of the wonderful works of this new Man.—*Ibid.*

*Personal faith in Christ.*—This man did not merely believe that Jesus Christ could cleanse a leper, but that He could cleanse *him*! It is very easy to believe for other people. There is really no faith in such impersonal, proxy confidence. The true faith believes for itself first, and then for others.

*Sickness and the soul.*—Sicknesses and diseases, says an old writer, are often necessary to the soul's health. God knows this better than we; wherefore we ought to resign ourselves into His hands, and not to ask for health and relief absolutely, but conditionally, as it shall please God, and as it shall conduce to our spiritual good.

Vers. 40-42. *Leprosy.*—Leprosy was regarded as the symbol of sin and of judgment (Num. xii. 10; 2 Kings v. 26, xv. 5; 2 Chron. xxvi. 20-23); also

of inscrutable visitations (Job ii. 7). 2. Recovery from leprosy was regarded as a symbol of salvation, as in the case of Naaman (2 Kings v. 2: cp. Ps. li. 9, with Lev. vi. 7). 3. The uncleanness, the gradual destruction of the system, the disgusting appearance, and the unexpected recovery by a full outbreak of the eruption—and, again, the slow but sure progress of the disease, the isolation of those who were affected by it from the society of the clean, the infectious nature of the trouble, its long duration and hopelessness—presented a variety of views under which sin and guilt with its consequences and effects, even upon innocent individuals, might be symbolised.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*A signal instance of faith in Christ.*—1. In the cures wrought by Christ faith was ever the connecting link between cause and effect—the channel which conveyed the healing balm to the festering sore—the medium which brought the saving power of God to bear upon the suffering weakness of man. 2. Faith in the heart was ever accompanied by confession with the mouth and expression in the life. As men believed, so they spoke and acted. 3. This leper came to Jesus, besought Jesus, and confessed his faith in Jesus. So far, he acted like the blind men at Jericho (Matt. xx. 29-34), and the father of the child with a dumb spirit (Mark ix. 17-27). But this leper's confession, unlike theirs, was made not in reply to any question put by Christ, but of his own voluntary motion. His soul was as full of faith as his body of leprosy. He had no doubt whatever as to Christ's power to heal; yet in his great humility

he would not dictate to the Divine Physician, but leave himself entirely in His hands: "If Thou art willing, Thou art able to cleanse me." 4. To such an appeal the Saviour had but one answer—the echo of the suppliant's cry: "I will; be thou clean." And as He uttered these gracious words, to show that He *could* do what He *would*, and *would* do what He *could*, He "put forth His hand, and touched him," and "immediately the leprosy departed," etc. 5. Behold that leper—as he was, and as he is! The disease, how hopeless: the remedy, how sure: the application of that remedy, how simple: the cure, how speedy and complete! That hopeless disease was leprosy: that sure remedy, the power of Christ: that simple application, faith in Jesus: that swift and effectual cure, a new creation!

Ver. 41. *Christ's touch*.—The word "be clean" was sufficient for His healing: why then *the touch*? What an illustration of Divinity! 1. That He could touch pollution and be undefiled. The water of life is not fouled by the corruption of those who come to drink. 2. This was Divine sympathy. We can almost hear this leper say, "Lord, I am unclean, vile, sinful, and separated; no one can even *touch* me, for fear of pollution; oh, heal me!" We can almost feel the thrill as the healing tide responded to the word of Jesus, and the new love, like an electric current, came at His touch. 3. In all Christian work the loving hand should accompany the loving word. John B. Gough says of the man who was permitted to reach him, "After twenty years, I can feel the power and love of the hand that was laid upon my shoulder that night." And the world has felt the touch, just as the multitudes who came to be healed felt the word and touch Jesus gave to the leper.

*Christ's helping hand*.—Like a sunbeam passing through foul water untarnished and unstained, or like some sweet spring such as travellers tell us

arises sometimes in the midst of the salt sea and retains its freshness and pours it over the surrounding bitterness, so Christ takes upon Himself our nature, and lays hold of our stained hands with the hand that continues pure while it grasps us, and will make us purer if we grasp it.

*The symbolic teaching of this miracle* is thus expressed by Bede: Typically, the leper represents the whole race of man languishing with sins, as this sufferer, full of leprosy, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." By the hand of the Saviour put forth—that is, by the Word of God become incarnate and touching human nature—they are cleansed from their old transgression, and are enabled to hear with the apostles the cheering words, "Now ye are clean, because of the word which I have spoken unto you"; and they who once, as abominable, were excluded from the city of God, are now brought within the Temple, and are presented unto Him who is a priest for ever, and offer for their cleansing their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

*Christ touching the leprosy of humanity*.—How often, in His human life, Christ repeated in the spirit what He here did in the body! When He ate with the publicans and sinners, endured the kiss of the fallen, sent away uncondemned the penitent adulteress, opened paradise to the dying malefactor, He was again and again touching the leprosy of humanity, touching them that He might make them clean. And when His Church went forth from the upper chamber, in the strength of His unseen presence and His Spirit's guidance, and stood before the dying pagan world; when it confronted the hideous profligacy of Corinth or Antioch, and the frivolous scepticism of Athens, and the dark devil-worship of Ephesus, and the coarse brutality of Philippi, and the wild fanaticism of Galatia, and the pitiless cruelties of Rome,—then over and over again Christ touched the leper and made him clean; and through the tainted views of that polluted world



there flowed out straight from Christ the resistless current of a new and purer life. The history of the first Christian centuries is the fulfilment of that of which this miracle was the shadow and promise.—*John Ellerton.*

*The leprosy of modern society.*—Think of the leprosy of modern English society, which some are afraid to touch, which too many have touched to their sorrow and ruin. Look at that great subject of popular amusements. There is plenty of corruption and disease there. But it is not copying Christ to stand aloof from it all and say, "Oh! these things are all so bad, so dangerous—the vice of the drama, the frivolity of fashionable pleasure, the immorality of popular fiction—these are so great, so corrupting, that we must ignore them; they are too bad for us to try to mend them." And it is pitiful when the reaction from this moral cowardice comes, and bright young lives are carried along by pleasure; when with a sort of feeling that they are defying and separating themselves from the good and the serious, they touch that which defiles, and lose their purity of heart, their faith in Christ, their longings to be His for ever. We want men and women to deal with this question of amusement in a spirit of courageous faith—to say, "These things need not be bad, and ought not to be bad; and if we bring Christ's touch upon them, we can and will purify them—purify our social life, our politics, our business, our commerce, our amusements, aye, and our Churches and our religious life too, for they too need the outstretched hand of Christ to make them clean."—*Ibid.*

*Dogmatic teaching of verse.*—This verse was regarded by the early Church as a mine of dogmatic teaching, specially suitable for the confutation of heresy. To Photinus, who taught that Jesus was a mere man and in no sense God, was objected the word, "I will," as indicating His claim to possess an almighty will, the power to heal at His own will. To Arius,

who taught the inferiority of the Son to the Father, were objected the words, "I will; be thou clean," as claiming equality of power. To Manichæus, who taught that Jesus did not possess a body in reality, but only in appearance, were objected the words, "Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him."

Ver. 42. *The healing of the leper a sign of hope to the world.*—1. The Lord can restore, even where a case seems desperate. 2. He is willing to do it. 3. He does it by entering into fellowship with the sufferings of the world. 4. By His suffering He takes away ours. 5. He separates between sin and its counterpart, misery; thus taking away the strength of sin.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

Ver. 44. *The use and abuse of testimony.*—There is no doubt real power in personal testimony, but it is quite possible we may lay too much stress upon it; and that is the danger in the present day. The young convert, before he has had any experience, is encouraged to tell forth his story, until there is this danger—that when the devil of unbelief is driven out, the devil of pride shall enter in, and the man begins to think that he has done something very great in trusting in Jesus. There is very great danger of pressing personal testimony too far. But there is real use of testimony. Our Lord seems to indicate it here: "Tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer," etc. It would be far better for you to go to your house in solitude, to think over in silence what God has done for you, and there in your solitary chamber to pour out your thanksgiving to God. There is more real true work done in the stillness of solitude than if you go and publish abroad what Christ has done for you. But there is a testimony you must bring: "Go thy way, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded." Not so much go and speak, but go and live; go and shew, not so much go and tell them

I am a cleansed man, but let them see the anointed hand, the purified ear. Let them see the life-blood coursing through your veins, and that you have become as a little child, humble and faithful. Go and shew yourself to the priests. And who are they? Those most opposed to My claims, those who hate Me, as the Messiah. Go and shew thyself to My enemies; they will not care for your speaking, but it will be your life that will be a testimony to them. Then go and offer as a gift what Moses commanded. If Moses has told you to sprinkle your hand, your ear, your feet—your ear, your hand, and your foot, and every part of your body must be sanctified not now in obedience to some iron law, but as expressive of your heart's gratitude for what Christ has done for you.—*E. A. Stuart.*

*Christ's command.*—What our Prophet commands is no costly offering, no painful penance—a delightful service, a surrender which is a relief. That we offer and present our souls and bodies to Him—that we trust our way to Him and say, "I will follow Thee"—that we snatch ourselves away from the old tyrants, from whose hands He has rescued us, and watch against any hint of a return to them—that we be His who has bought us with His blood.

Ver. 45. *A fault to be guarded against.*—The healed leper was like those who, out of thankfulness of heart indeed, but yet inconsiderately, neglect the inward commandment of the Holy

Spirit, and make too much talk about the grace of God, to their own and others' hurt.—*Von Gerlach.*

*Imprudence better than apathy.*—The case of those who in our own days are led to do things of which Christian prudence cannot approve is nearly parallel; they do what is not right, but yet it may be easily believed that their fault is in some cases more easily pardoned than the coldness and apathy of those who undertake to condemn them.—*Bishop H. Goodwin.*

*Christ's withdrawal.*—Some have thought of this withdrawal as a kind of Levitical quarantine, in acknowledgment of the ceremonial uncleanness acquired by touching the leper, which became generally known from the report of the latter. Certainly the multitude had no scruples arising from this consideration, and it is more natural to suppose that Christ refrained from openly entering any city in order to avoid the applause of men, and the commotion which, at this moment, His presence would have excited. Those who really desired to be with Him for any high and sufficient reason would follow Him even into the wilderness; but He would not thrust Himself voluntarily into the idle throng, which, for any or no cause, is collected with little notice in a populous town.—*W. J. Deane.*

*Retirement from the world.*—The more a servant of God withdraws himself from the world, the more highly does the world esteem him, and the more likely is it to heed his admonitions.

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. *The beginning of the gospel.*—In the old days of the South, a negro slave and preacher had an infidel master. The master said to the slave one day, "You are a preacher, Sam?" "Well, I tells about Jesus some, massa." "Well, if you are a preacher you ought to understand the Bible. Now tell me what does this mean?" And he opened the Bible and read, "And whom He did foreknow, them He did predestinate"—words that have puzzled wiser heads than the poor slave. "Well," said the slave,

"massa, where is it?" "It's in Romans," said the master. "Oh, my dear massa! I will explain dis 'ole business to you. It is very simple. You begin with Matthew, and do all the dear Lord tells you to do there; and then you go on to Mark, and Luke, and John; and when you get to that place it is easy enough, but you can't begin there."

*The gospel seen, though never heard.*—A poor Chinaman came to a missionary to ask for baptism. When asked where he had heard the gospel, he answered he had never

heard the gospel, but he had *seen* it. He then told of a poor man at Ning-po who had once been a confirmed opium-smoker, and a man of violent temper. This man had learned about the Christian religion, and his whole life was altered; he gave up the opium, and became loving and amiable. "Oh," said the candidate for baptism, "I have not heard the gospel, but I have *seen* it."

Vers. 2. *Eastern roads*.—The Western traveller who first sees the wretched, difficult, dangerous tracts which answer for Eastern roads, will wonder, first, that they are passable at all, and, second, that they can be as frequently travelled as they are, and yet show so little trace of the animal's feet. Long after he has ceased to think that he must dismount at any passage seemingly impassable on the back of his animal, long after he has become accustomed to mounting and descending places far more difficult and dangerous than going up and down stairs on horseback, he will wonder whether he can be really on the road, since there are so few signs of travel. Loose stones which certainly ought to be thrust out of the way persistently keep their impertinent place; larger stones are wedged in for a few feet, just as if a brook had made its way along and washed away the earth, so that a succession of slips and stumblings meet the traveller for ages, where a half-hour's work would have left a good passage for ever. It is only when going over smooth rocks, where the horses' feet have worn an actual gutter, scarcely twice the width of a hoof, and that often by just sliding, that one realises that he is on the beaten road. Beaten: the very Oriental word for a road means just that very thing—something *beaten*; and the word has just about as exact a coincidence with the English word as can be in all its other uses. The horses know it.

Vers. 4-8. *John Baptist the model prophet and ambassador*.—Of timidity he knew no thing. He had the fear of God within him and no other fear: the Divine honour and glory, with a singular abnegation of all self-honour and self-glory. Stranger and enemy to all tortuous ways and sinister policy: loyal to principle, without deflection or compromise. He said what he meant, and meant what he said—undeterred by frowns and sneers, false etiquette and conventionalisms: his one thought and aim to unmask hypocrisy, and vindicate the cause and claims of righteousness. He felt it his special mission to expose the degenerate and effete forms of religious life. In doing so he spared neither regal purple, nor hierarchal robe, nor rabbinical phylactery, if underneath these lurked iniquity and vice. It was like the *réveille* which wakes up at sunrise the sleeping camp; or like the

trumpet-blast or beat of drum preparatory to the battle-charge.—*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*

*The Baptist in advance of his age*.—John was in the kingdom of grace, like those gifted men in the world of thought, or in the world of practical life, who are always ahead of the mass of people around them; they have the inspiration not of supernatural grace, but of natural genius, itself a gift of God, but of a different order of value and of power. They are like lofty mountains whose summits the sun has already lit up, while he has not yet risen to shine upon the plain beneath. Truth has come to them before it has come to the mass of men around them. It has come to them as to its predestined forerunners. The speculative truth which everybody will recognise ten years hence they see now; but then they are alone on their watchtower, and if they say what they think, it is only to be smiled down as enthusiasts. The practical discoveries of which everybody will proclaim the high importance in another generation these men advocate now amid the discouraging criticisms of friends who advise them not to risk capital upon a wild venture. The social improvement or the public reform which nobody will think of challenging when it has become at no distant date law or custom they plead for now, when it is denounced either as reaction or revolution, when it is generally unpopular.—*Canon Liddon*.

*Artistic representations of the Baptist*.—Artists who have attempted to paint a picture of the Baptist, getting their idea of his appearance from a profound study of his character, have represented him as a man having a supernatural look on his face, with eyes that seem as if they saw far away, and the countenance of one who carries at the same time a great burden and a great joy. Perhaps more nearly than any other who has ever lived he answers our ideal of a messenger of God.

*Socrates preparing the way for Christ*.—*Marsilius Ficinus* bestowed on *Socrates* the title of the John the Baptist of the Old World. To go still further, as some have done, and compare the Greek philosopher to the great Ensample of perfect love and perfect holiness, the Lamb of God, the Son of Man, seems to us, to say the least, scarcely reverential or Christian. But the mission of *Socrates*, like the mission of the greatest of prophets, was to prepare the way, to make straight the paths for Him who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

*Twofold aspect of repentance*.—Like *Janus Bifrons*, the Roman god looking two ways, a true repentance not only bemoans the past but takes heed to the future. Repentance, like the lights of a ship at her bow and her stern, not only looks to the



track she has made, but to the path before her.

*A startling message.*—The message "repent," in the state in which he found men, was like a peal of thunder at midnight. The nation was like a suddenly awakened city, in fixed terror gazing upon black window-spaces fitfully and incessantly ablaze with lightning-bursts, awaiting in quivering dread each frightful following peal. It was midnight. The light was coming; but John was not that light. He came to waken men. To awaken he was a voice.

*Repentance implies change of mind and life.*—One of Luther's happiest moments was when, reading in his Greek Testament, he found that repentance meant a change of mind rather than penance-doing. A captain at sea discovers that by some mistake the steersman is steering the ship directly for the rocks. How is the danger to be avoided? By scrubbing the decks or setting the men to the pumps? No! these things are good enough in their own time; but if the ship is to be saved, one thing must be done—her course must be changed. So the captain utters a few quick words, and the ship turns and speeds away from the danger. John's preaching was in like manner a call to men to turn from the dangerous rocks of sin, and to make for the only safe haven. Repentance results in change of action. Just as the whole ship turns in obedience to the helm, so the change of mind produces a change of life. Here comes in the well-known story of the storekeeper who could not recollect the sermon; she only knew that after it she went straight home and destroyed all her light weights. A Hindu candidate for Christian baptism was asked what evidence he had to offer of his conversion. "Formerly," he said, "I was proud and delighted in evil, but since I heard the words of Jesus I delight in these things no more."

*Repentance the way to heaven.*—In the neighbourhood of Hoddam Castle, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, there was once a tower called the "Tower of Repentance." What gave the tower its name we are not told, but it is said that an English baronet, walking near the castle, saw a shepherd lad lying upon the ground, reading attentively. "What are you reading, lad?" "The Bible, sir." "The Bible, indeed!" laughed the gentleman; "then you must be wiser than the parson. Can you tell me the way to heaven?" "Yes, sir, I can," replied the boy, in no way embarrassed by the mocking tone of the other; "you must go by way of yonder tower." The gentleman saw that the boy had learned right well the lesson of his book, and, being rebuked, he walked away in silence.

Ver. 6. *The girdle.*—The girdle was useful in many ways. The soldier carried his

scimitar, his dagger, and in later days his pistols—the merchant his money—the scribe his writing implements, in his girdle. It served to keep the garment together, and enabled the wearer to tuck it up short when engaged in any active operation; so we read of Elijah that he girded up his loins before he ran (1 Kings xviii. 46), and our Lord impressed it upon His disciples that they should be always girded, *i.e.* active, ready, and prepared for any emergency (Luke xii. 35: cp. Eph. vi. 14; 1 Pet. i. 13).—*W. F. Shaw.*

*Power of self-denial.*—John came to denounce luxury, and soft clothing, and sumptuous fare, and he was a living example of the austerity which he called for. And how many preachers have been prompted to imitate him! SS. Martin and Dominic, Anselm and Borromeo, and a host of others, have themselves worn the same externals of severity, as the surest way of recommending the self-denial they sought to inculcate. And though such asceticism is deprecated in the nineteenth century, history bears abundant witness to its power in the past. It was from a hard life in the desert that SS. Gregory Nazianzen and Basil came forth to preach with such success; and Simon Stylites was by no means a solitary instance to show men of active lives and varied occupations, how even kings, burdened with imperial cares, were eager to seek counsel and direction from a lonely and austere ascetic.—*Dean Luckock.*

Ver. 7. *John's inferiority to Jesus.*—We have seen on some beautiful morning the sun rising in glory out of the east, and the moon still fair and bright in the west. This is what I think of when I think of Jesus and the Baptist. The rising sun, the setting moon. One increaseth, the other decreaseth. Not because they antagonise each other, but because the inferior fades before the superior splendour. One closes the dispensation to which it belongs—the night. The other opens the dispensation which belongs to it—the day. One has the beauty of a recluse; the other comes to mingle with the activities and sorrows and joys of men. One gives borrowed light; the other is light in its essence. One gives light that is transient; the other stores light and heat in everything that it touches. The one is negative—preaching repentance; the other is constructive and productive—founding a kingdom.

Ver. 8. *The soul without the Spirit.*—A modern writer compares the Church, or the soul, without the gift of the Spirit, to—1. Iron wire laid for a telegraph. It is powerful only when attached to the battery. The later invention of the electric light would make the comparison still stronger. The

points, or the fine wire of the lamp, are dark and cold till the connected battery makes them give forth a light which suggests the sun itself. 2. He compares them also to water, which, when cold, is solid, brittle ice: "gently warmed, it flows; further heated, it mounts to the sky"; and he might have added that, with still greater heat, it becomes steam—the greatest working force known. 3. So, "an organ filled with the ordinary degree of air which exists everywhere is dumb. Throw in, not another air, but an unsteady current of the same air, and sweet, but imperfect and uncertain, notes immediately respond to the player's touch; increase the current to a full supply, and every pipe swells with music."

*Need of the Spirit.*—Here is a noble ship. . . . The forests have masted her; in many a broad yard of canvas a hundred looms have given her wings. Her anchor has been weighed to the rude sea-chant; the needle trembles on her deck; with his eye on that Friend, unlike worldly friends, true in storm as in calm, the helmsman stands impatient by the wheel. And when, as men bound to a distant shore, the crew have said farewell to wives and children, why, then, lies she there over the self-same ground, rising with the flowing and falling with the ebbing tide? The cause is plain. They want a wind to raise that drooping pennon and fill these empty sails. They look to heaven; and so they may; out of the skies their help must come. At length their prayer is heard. . . . And now, like a steed touched by the rider's spur, she starts, bounds forward, plunges through the waves, and, heaven's wind her moving power, is off and away, amid blessings and prayers, to the land she is chartered for. Even so, though heaven-born, heaven-called, heaven-bound, though endowed with a new heart and new mind, we stand in the same need of celestial influences.—*T. Guthrie, D.D.*

Vers. 9-11. *Christ the rainbow of the new covenant.*—The baptism of our Saviour stands us under the gospel, instead of the same comfort, which the rainbow afforded unto the old world. The rainbow is a reflexion of the sunbeams in a watery cloud, and was ordained as a sign of pacification (Gen. ix. 13) that God's anger should no more strive with man. Such a rainbow was Jesus Christ (Rev. iv. 3). Look upon Him, not standing majestically in a cloud above, but wading, like a humble servant, into the waters of Jordan beneath; look upon Him, how He sanctifies that element, which was once a means to drown the world, and now is made a means to save it; look upon Him in that posture, as a rainbow in the water, and you may read God's sure covenant with His whole Church, that His anger is pacified in His well-beloved Son, and that He will be

gracious with His inheritance (John i. 29; Eph. ii. 14; 1 Pet. iii. 21).—*Bishop Hacket.*

*A further revelation of the Godhead.*—There are some of our ancient cathedrals, such as York and Lincoln, crowned with triple towers; yet when seen afar off in the blue distance, only a single mass of building can be discerned; but when advancing on our journey nearer, we perceive that there are towers, though perhaps we cannot clearly trace their form or number—but when we arrive yet closer, we can see and admire the grand central tower, and the two western campaniles in all their grace and majesty. So the old world was taught first to recognise the Unity of God; then as the ages passed away the Second and the Third Persons of the Trinity were revealed; and at last in the fulness of time we behold the glory of the Most Sacred Trinity made manifest to men! When the Incarnate Redeemer went down into Jordan, the heavenly light of the Divine Spirit descended "as a dove," whilst the Father's voice proclaimed His almighty sanction!

Ver. 9. *The fellowship of penitence.*—A strange thing happened a few years ago in an American court of justice. A young man was asked if he had aught to say why the extreme penalty should not be passed upon him. At that moment a grey-haired man, his face furrowed with sorrow, stepped into the prisoner's box unhindered, placed his hand affectionately upon the culprit's shoulder, and said, "Your honour, we have nothing to say. The verdict which has been found against us is just. We have only to ask for mercy." "We"!—there was nothing against the old father; yet in that moment he lost himself, and identified his very being with that of his wayward boy. So in His baptism Christ pushes His way to a place beside us, lays His hand upon the sinner's shoulder, and bears the shame and sorrow with him.

Vers. 12, 13. *Quarantania.*—This wilderness has been identified, by the voice of tradition, in the Greek and Latin Churches, as that wild and lonely region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, called in modern geography Quarantania. It is an extensive plateau, elevated to a considerable height above the plain of Jericho and the west bank of the Jordan; and hence the literal accuracy of the expression in St. Matthew, that Jesus was "led up" into the wilderness. Travellers have described it as a barren, sterile waste of painful whiteness, shut in on the west by a ridge of grey limestone hills, moulded into every conceivable shape; while on the east the view is closed by the gigantic wall of the Moab mountains, appearing very near at hand, but in reality a long way off, the deception being caused by

the nature of the intervening ground, which possesses no marked features, no difference of colour on which to fix the eye for the purpose of forming an estimate of distance. Over this vast expanse of upland country there are signs of vegetation only in two or three places, where winter torrents have scooped out a channel for themselves, and stimulate year after year into brief existence narrow strips of verdure along their banks. The monotony of the landscape and the uniformity of its colouring are varied only when the glaring afternoon sun projects the shadows of the ghostly rocks across the plain, or, at rare intervals, when a snowy cloud, that seems as if born of the hills themselves, sails across the deep-blue sky and casts down on the desolate scene the cool, dark mantle of its shade. A more dreary and lonely scene it is impossible to imagine.—*H. Macmillan, D.D.*

*Great temptations.*—The story of the Temptation is peculiar, but not wholly unique. It is not without its parallel in human experience, not without its analogue in literature and history. The great heroes whom the world reveres have passed through similar experiences of test and trial. Thus, in the legends of the East, there is brought to us the story of the temptation of Buddha on that night when all the powers of evil gathered around about him to assail him by violence or to entice him by wiles.

“Nor knoweth one,  
Not even the wisest, how those fiends of hell  
Battled that night to keep the truth from  
Buddh:

Sometimes with terrors of the tempest,  
blasts

Of demon-armies clouding all the wind  
With thunder, and with blinding lightning  
flung

In jagged javelins of purple wrath  
From splitting skies; sometimes with wiles  
and words

Fair-sounding, 'mid hushed leaves and  
softened airs

From shapes of witching beauty; wanton  
songs,

Whispers of love; sometimes with royal  
allures

Of proffered rule; sometimes with mocking  
doubts,

Making truth vain.”

So, in the mythology of Greece, we have the story of the temptation of Hercules. Pleasure comes to him in wanton but bewitching form, and bids him follow her, and promises him the cup of pleasure and that he shall drink of it. She will strew his path with flowers all the way, and accompany him with song and dancing. Wisdom comes to him with sterner voice—with beauty, indeed, but with solemn and almost forbidding beauty—and calls him to combat

and to battle that he may win manhood. So in the later history of the Church is the strange, mystical story of the temptation of St. Anthony, with its wiles and its enticements, with its demons inviting to sin by smiles, and its demons tormenting with red-hot pincers. In human history we find the same or like record. We have like temptations in the lives of John Wesley, of Luther, of Xavier, of Loyola. Open the page of history where you will, and you can hardly find the story of any great, noble, prophetic soul that has not had its hour of battle with the powers of darkness. As in the story of Napoleon the Great, concerning whom history tells us that for two long months he struggled over the question whether he should divorce his faithful wife and take another that he might build up a European dynasty, and came out from his chamber after the last night of battle with a face so pallid, so wrought upon by the struggle, that it was as no face he ever shewed after the hottest battlefield of Europe. But love went down before the hope of ambition in that battle; and the devil won.

*Tempted like as we are.*—It is recorded of the great soldier, the gallant Montrose, that finding his followers ill provided with armour, he stripped off breastplate, and steel cap, with his stout leathern coat, and rode into battle in his bared shirt-sleeves, at the head of his men, to show them that he scorned to use defences of which they could not avail themselves. Even so our Great Captain laid aside the panoply of heaven, and as a man entered into the conflict.

*Temptation following on privileges.*—Pirates, when they see a ship set sail for a rich cargo to foreign parts, keep away, and take no notice of her; they let her go by in peace; but when she is coming back from that foreign port, laden with rich goods, the case is very different. Then the pirate uses all his efforts to take that ship, and leaves no means untried. So with us; after Holy Communion the devil knows that we are very dear to God, and have received Christ.

*Satan vanquished.*—There is in Tintern churchyard, not far from the grand ruins of the abbey, a defaced and broken tombstone, grass-grown, and whereon only one sentence can be read; it consists of these striking words—“I tread Satan under my feet,” not a word more; it is the record of an unknown fight, and a nameless victory over the wiles of the devil. Such may, through Christ's help, be one day the triumphant exclamation of us all.

Ver. 14. *Eastern prisons.*—In the East imprisonment means a far harder fate, as a rule, than we can realise. At Gaza I saw a crowd of men caged up in a small barred



space, with no room to move, and no means of attending to their personal cleanliness; and at Rome, the Tullianum, below the Capitol, still shews, in its subterranean horrors, the dire misery inflicted in antiquity, on persons accused, whether innocent or guilty. John, however, must, at times, have been allowed to sit—perhaps in another Gaza cage—where he could see and be seen, for his disciples could converse with him.—*C. Geikie, D.D.*

Ver. 15. *After John comes Christ.*—The human heart is a castle; repentance is the gate that opens to admit the gospel. If that gate is not opened, heaven's artillery must flame forth against it. Christ comes to the loyal heart as a welcome guest, to the rebellious as a conquering king. What the water cannot purify, the fire must burn.

*The longer repentance is delayed, the harder it becomes.*—Blot a copy-book all over, and you will find it a hard matter to erase the marks. Twist the growing sapling, and you will never be able to straighten it, when it is grown. Here comes in the story of the boy whose father drove a nail into a post for every fault, and took one out for every good action. Once it happened that the post was entirely cleared. "Ah, father," said the boy in tears, "the marks are left!"

*Low in repentance, but high in faith.*—An old saint, on his death-bed, once used this remarkable expression: "Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance; but"—and here is the beauty of it—"lift me high as heaven in faith." The repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is the faith that lifts him as high as heaven, and the two are perfectly consistent with each other. Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet—the stripping of repentance, and the clothing of faith!

*Christ's watchword: Repent!*—In His recorded career the close student can find every modern character met by Christ and instructed. In these cures of sick souls is there a common base-line of operations? If you look in at a watchmaker's window, you find the repairer doing a different thing to almost every watch. One wants a new mainspring, but otherwise is in good order; another has no fault with the mainspring, but wants new jewels. Another has neither of these faults, but a broken crystal. At least we may say there is no one fault which in every watch demands repairing. The souls of men which Christ repaired, are they like the watches, each righted in different ways, and only casually presenting the same defect? Is Zaccheus repaired as to avarice, and otherwise not touched; Paul as to intense bigotry, a very different fault you see; the outcast as to chastity; Nicodemus as to his opinions, but otherwise not, and

not needing? Is Christ's salvation patch-work? Or is there in every soul which the Restorer set right one and the same radical fault, treated in reality in the same way, though with different outward methods of approach? To every man He said, "Repent." It is the common base-line of cure. It is as if the mainspring was broken in us all.—*E. J. Haynes.*

*"Repent."*—Christ began His ministry with that word, preaching it. Think what it is to preach "Repent" to a promiscuous audience. Are there none who need not the message? You are a physician, and before you stand three men. You preach a cure to them, feeling no man's pulse, nor taking other diagnosis. "Diet, gentlemen. Be careful of your food, that's the cure." "But, doctor," objects the first man, "that applies to the next man, for he has gout; I, however, have a broken leg, and the third man a cataract on the eye." Multiply the three men by one hundred. It is the city hospital. How absurd this curing at arm's-length, standing at one end of the ward, with one word. Not a specific hospital, not if all its sufferers had trouble of the eye, could be so treated. Yet Christ stood and preached to hundreds of sick souls, and sent His ministers to do likewise, with one word, "Repent." Every man needs then to repent; it is the beginning of the cure, if the Physician is to be believed.—*Ibid.*

*The salvation of man depends upon his subjection to the rule of God.*—To a ship's company who have mutinied and deposed their captain, who alone knows how to steer the vessel, there can be no deliverance from tempest or from rocks, except by their submission and renewed allegiance. To a world fallen into disbelief and disobedience, there can be no hope except through the obedience of faith. To a revolted world groaning and travelling under the usurper's heel, there can be no gospel but the glad tidings of the reign of God.

*The gospel call.*—There is a touching poem by Felicia Hemans, in which she describes a Crusader who has been taken captive by the Saracens, and who, whilst chained in the dungeons of some fortress in Palestine, hears the sound of a Crusading squadron passing through the valley beneath the towers of the castle where he lies in fetters. He listens to the tramp of the horsemen, the murmur of their words, and the high, clear notes of the trumpets, as they ring out with a challenge as they pass along, and then those notes grow fainter and weaker and pass away altogether. Not so, however, with the trumpet voice of the gospel's call. Again and again it summons the sinner to repent and believe—to escape by God's grace from the dungeon of evil habits, and to obey the call of God.

*God demands belief.*—"What does that mean?" said a Christian disciple to an elder brother, as he referred to a certain passage of Scripture. "What does it say?" was the answer. He read the passage over. "It says so and so." "Well, then, it means what it says." This first lesson in Scriptural exposition is one of the most important that can be learned. A preacher of the gospel once addressed a note to another minister, inquiring, "How do you interpret such and such passages?" The answer was about as follows: "Dear sir, I do not interpret God's Word; I believe it, and I advise you to do the same."

Ver. 16. *The Sea of Galilee.*—Dr. Tristram, describing his approach to the Sea of Galilee from Nazareth, says: "For nearly three hours we had ridden on, with Hermon in front, sparkling through its light cloud-mantle, but still no sight of the Sea of Galilee. One ridge after another had been surmounted, when on a sudden the calm blue basin, slumbering in placid sweetness beneath its surrounding wall of hills, burst upon us, and we were looking down on the hallowed scenes of our Lord's ministry. We were on the brow of a very steep hill. Below us was a narrow plain, sloping to the sea, the beach of which we could trace to its northern extremity. At our feet lay the city of Tiberias, the only remaining town on its shores, enclosed by crumbling fortifications, with shattered but once massive round bastions. Along that fringe, could we have known where to find them, lay the remains of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Opposite to us were the heights of the country of the Gadarenes, and the scene of the feeding of the five thousand. On some one of the slopes beneath us the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. The first gaze on the Sea of Galilee, lighted up with the bright sunshine of a spring afternoon, was one of the moments of life not soon or easily forgotten. It was different from my expectations; our view was so commanding. In some respect it recalled in miniature the first view of the Lake of Geneva, from the crest of the Jura, as it is approached by the old Besançon road—Hermon taking the place of Mont Blanc, the Plain of Gennesaret recalling the Pays de Vaud, and the steep banks opposite the bold coast of Savoy. All looked small for the theatre of such great events, but all the incidents seemed brought together as in a diorama. There was a calm peacefulness in the look of these shores on the west, with the paths by the water's edge, which made them the fitting theatre for the delivery of the message of peace and reconciliation."

*Fishermen make ready converts.*—It is a singular fact that the fisher caste have been in every country in India the earliest

converts to the Roman Catholic Church, so much so as to render it worthy of inquiry, whether it be only a coincidence, or the result of some permanent and predisposing cause. Is it that there is an habitual tendency to veneration of the Supreme Being in "those who go down to the sea in ships, and see His power in the great deep"? Or is it that, being a low caste themselves, the fishers of India and Ceylon acquire a higher status by espousing Christianity? Or have they some sympathy with a religion whose first apostles and teachers were the fishermen of Galilee?—*Sir J. E. Tennant.*

*The casting-net* is a fine web of strong material, generally beautiful in every workmanlike respect. When open, it is either circular or more or less conical. Its rim carries leaden weights, to sink it to the bottom when thrown. It is often used from boats, and that even when a seine is used at the same time; but still oftener from the rocky shore. The fisherman runs along the rocks with his net on his arm, drawn up into a rope-like bundle, and wound about above his wrist. His motions are very stealthy as he nears the place to throw; his net is taken into his hand, with the slack so disposed as to work just as he wants it; sometimes using one hand, sometimes two hands, for the throw. As he comes to the spot, instantly the net flies off, expanding from a lean, wet swab to a circle, and thus goes down upon and into the water, with little splash; perhaps close by, perhaps thirty feet away. Scarcely has the net touched the water before the thrower is in after it; for if he was not already naked his garment is off in a twinkling. He dives down, gathers up the net by its edge, and then comes back, to take out the fish and wrap them up in the bosom of his garment.—*Prof. I. H. Hall.*

Ver. 17. *Ministers are fishers.*—A busy profession, a toilsome calling, no idle man's occupation, as the vulgar conceive it, nor needless trade, taken up at last to pick a living out of. Let God's fishermen busy themselves as they must, sometimes in preparing, sometimes in mending, sometimes in casting abroad, sometimes in drawing in the net, that they may "separate the precious from the vile," etc. (Jer. xv. 19; Matt. xiii. 48); and no man shall have just cause to twit them with idleness, or to say they have an easy life.—*John Trapp.*

*The minister as a fisherman must fit himself for his employment.*—If some fish will bite only by day, he must fish by day; if others will bite only by moonlight, he must fish for them by moonlight.—*Richard Cecil.*

*Fishers of men.*—I have known a congregation so full of kindly Christian workers that in the low neighbourhood in which they worked they got the nickname of "Grippers." Some, hearing the name, thought it must

be a new sect, but it only marked the old apostolic quality. All Christians ought to pray for this power of catching souls. It is not violence, loudness, or terror that gives it; but love, goodness, the clear and strong convictions that come from following Christ.—*R. Glover.*

*Christ's power to shape men.*—In a rough stone, a cunning lapidary will easily foresee what his cutting, and his polishing, and his art will bring that stone to. A cunning statuary discerns in a marble stone under his feet, where there will arise an eye, and an ear, and a hand, and other lineaments to make it a perfect statue. Much more did our Saviour Christ, who was Himself the author of that disposition in them, foresee in these fishermen an inclinableness to become useful in that great service of His Church. Therefore He took them from their own ship, but He sent them from His Cross; He took them weatherbeaten with north and south winds, and rough-cast with foam and mud; but He sent them back souped, and smoothed, and levigated, quickened, and inanimated with that spirit which He had breathed into them; He took fishermen, and He sent fishers of men.—*J. Donne, D.D.*

*Ver. 18. Following Christ at cost to self.*—In 1695 Madame Guyon was imprisoned in the Castle of Vincennes, on her refusal to abandon her religious convictions, and cease to preach Christ to her friends. To her brother, who besought her to throw off her religion, she wrote, "If your house, my dear brother, had been made of precious stones, and if I could have been treated and honoured in it as a queen, yet I should have forsaken all to follow after God." It is said of Nebridius that he left his native country, where he lived in great luxury, forsook friends and kindred, to go into a foreign city to live, in the most ardent search after truth and wisdom. He forsook all to become a disciple of wisdom. So must we make everything else of a secondary nature, and give Christ the firstfruits of our hands, hearts, hopes.

*Ver. 23. An unclean spirit the essence of pollution.*—It is not every unclean thing that offends the sight, while the slightest stain upon some things will excite in us deep dislike; the feeling depends entirely upon the nature of the thing, and the purpose to which it is applied. We pass by an unclean stone unnoticed. . . . But rising a step higher in the scale of creation, to an unclean plant, we become conscious of a slight emotion of dislike, because we see that which might have pleased the eye and have beautified a spot in creation disfigured and useless. An unclean animal creates our dislike still more, for instead of proving useful in any way it is merely a moving pollution. But an

unclean human being excites our loathing more than all; it presents our nature in a light so disgusting that it lessens our pity for him if he be miserable, and excites in us ideas of disease, contamination, and pain. But an unclean spirit—it is loathsome above all things. It is the soul and essence of pollution; it is the spectacle which excites the deep dislike of God Himself.—*F. F. Trench.*

*Vers. 25, 26. Restored harmony.*—The legend runs that there once stood in an old baronial castle a musical instrument upon which nobody could play. It was complicated in its mechanism, and during years of misuse the dust had gathered and clogged it, while dampness and variations of temperature had robbed the strings of their tone. Various experts had tried to repair it, but without success, and when the hand of a player swept over the chords it woke only harsh discords and unlovely sounds. But there came one day to the castle a man of another sort. He was the maker of the instrument, and saw what was amiss, and what was needed for its repair, and with loving care and skill he freed the wires from dust, and adjusted those which were awry, and brought the jangling strings into tune, and then the hall rang with bursts of exquisite music. So with these souls of ours, so disordered by sin, that everything is confusion and at cross-purposes: it is not until their Divine Maker comes and attempts the task of repair and readjustment that they can be set right and be made capable of the harmonies for which they were originally constructed.

*Ver. 27. God is against disease.*—Remember that the men who said this did not look then, as we look now, on Jesus as Son of God. What they saw was a son of man with power over the subtlest form of disease; and from that day man began to realise that God had "given this power unto men," and that the disease that walketh in darkness or destroyeth at noonday should by man be met and conquered. Nor was this all the glad tidings of the new gospel of the Great Physician. Men saw Him who claimed to be one with the Father, going about doing good, and healing all manner of diseases among the people. Then, thought they, God is against disease; it is a Godlike thing to destroy it. And when the Christian world awoke to a further consciousness of the cause—viz. that these bodies of ours are made in God's fair image, and built to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, are not our own, but are bought with a price, and belong unto the God who hath redeemed us—then the Christian world arose in enthusiasm, and determined to seek and save not only the dying souls, but the dying bodies



of men also. Hospitals for victory over death arose, where before had only been public buildings to victory in battle over fellow-men.—*H. D. Ravensley.*

Ver. 32-34. *Christ's care for humanity.*—If we may reverently compare this scene with its modern analogies, it bears less a resemblance to anything that occurs in the life of a clergyman than to the occupation of a physician to a hospital on the day of his seeing his out-patients. There is, indeed, all the difference in the world between the best professional advice, and the summary cure such as was our Lord's. But we are, for the moment, looking at the outward aspects of the scene; and it shows very vividly how largely Christ's attention was directed to the well-being of the bodily frame of man. Now it would be a great mistake to suppose that this feature of our Saviour's ministry was accidental or inevitable. Nothing in His work was accidental: all was deliberate, all had an object. We may infer with reverence and with certainty that His first object was to shew Himself as the Deliverer and Restorer of human nature as a whole: not of the reason and conscience merely without the imagination and the affections—not of the spiritual side of men's nature, without the bodily; and, therefore, He was not merely Teacher, but also Physician; and therefore and thus He has shed upon the medical profession to the end of time a radiance and a consecration which are ultimately due to the conditions of that redemptive work, to achieve which He came down from heaven teaching and healing.—*Canon Liddon.*

*Godlike works.*—When one of the greatest of God's heroes, one of the most illustrious saints of Christendom, made an oration—preached, as we should say, a funeral sermon—concerning a brother, holy and heroic, whose soul was in paradise—when Gregory of Nazianzum would show unto the people how, though Basil rested from his labours, his works did follow, and he being dead yet spoke—he pointed towards the hospital which Basil had built, and said, "Go forth a little out of the city, and see the new city, his treasure of godliness, the storehouse of alms which he collected; see the place where disease is relieved by charity and by skill, where the poor leper finds at last a home! It was Basil who persuaded men to care for others; it was Basil who taught them thus to honour Christ."—*Dean Hole.*

*Christ the centre of attraction.*—Leaving the Paris Exhibition as the sun went down, I noted an electric light that, revolving round and round, shot its ethereal pencilled rays far across the sky, touching with a momentary radiance the vegetation or the buildings across which they passed; and

looking up I noted innumerable sparks wavering, vibrating in the illumination. For a moment I could not think what this meant, for there is scarcely any scintillation, and certainly no sparks, thrown off from the electric light. Then in an instant it occurred to me that these bright lights were myriads of insects attracted from the dark ocean of air round, and which, protected from the burning luminary by the strong glass, were safely rejoicing in the ecstasy of those beams. So here, around the beams of spiritual light and love that radiate from the Saviour, the innumerable hosts of suffering, struggling men and women of that day come within the field of our vision.—*J. A. Picton.*

Ver. 35. *The early morning.*—If you would see a likeness of heaven on earth, you must look for it in the early morning. The day then seems new-born; there are all sorts of beauteous sights and sounds; the air is balmy, the dew glistening on the open flowers like diamonds. Birds are singing their matin praises; cattle lowing, etc. Men, too, are scarce astir, and no evil passions exciting your peaceful contemplations. It is, indeed, a time for communing with God. The spiritual analogy or correspondence of the morning is also striking. It denotes a new state in the regenerate life, and this is a direct gift from the Lord, who is called in God's Word the "*Morning Star*," and "*a morning without clouds*." All great workers have been early risers. Dr. Doddridge ascribed the preparation of most of his works to the circumstance of his rising at five o'clock every morning, saying that this course pursued for forty years would add ten years to man's life. Dr. Homer observes that "there is a certain loveliness and a salutary or even curative influence in the morning atmosphere beyond that of any other portion of the day." Those who habitually lie late in bed are generally the drones and dawdlers of society. This kind of self-indulgence is enervating to both body and mind, and we ought to watch and pray against it, as against a deadly sin.—*O. P. Heller.*

*Morning praises.*—When St. Francis of Assisi used to hear the birds sing in the morning, he would say to his brethren, "Our little winged brothers are already praising their Creator, and are singing Him a song of gratitude for the new day that is shining above them. Shall we allow ourselves to be put to shame by the birds?"

*Morning is the golden hour for prayer and praise.*—The mind is fresh; the mercies of the night and the new resurrection of the dawn both prompt a devout soul to thankfulness. The buoyant heart takes its earliest flight, like the lark, toward the gates of heaven. One of the finest touches in Bunyan's immortal allegory is his de-

scription of Christian in the chamber of peace, "who awoke and sang," while his window looked out to the sun rising. If even the stony statue of heathen Memnon made music when the first rays of the dawn kindled on its flinty brow, surely no Christian heart should be dumb when God causes the outgoings of the morning to rejoice.

*Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night.*—At night it is our covering; in the morning it is our armour: so at all times it defends us from the malice of Satan, our own subordinations and betrayings, the unequal weather the world assaults us with, and preserves us in the favour and esteem of Heaven (Ps. cxxxii. 1-5, cxix. 148, cxliii. 8-12; 1 Sam. xiii. 12).—*O. Feltham.*

*Retirement with God* is the only preparation for success, and the only medicine for failure. The secret of all strong souls lies in those times of loneliness when they were bound hand and foot as captives to the Everlasting Will. We deride such nowadays; call them mystic, contemplationist, fanatic. But if it were anything but religion, people would not laugh. Tell them of Demosthenes living in a cellar, with head half shaved to prevent his appearing in public, and there will be admiration: was it any wonder that he became an orator? But let a man be as bent on becoming a saint, let him give up one hour's frivolous talk in order to commune with his Father in secret, then we suspect that such an one is becoming righteous overmuch. Mind, no one complains of a man being anxious to be wise overmuch, rich overmuch, healthy overmuch; he may burn the midnight oil and study, watch the markets and scheme, frequent the gymnasium and develop his muscle, and no one will find fault; but to spend time on what is at least as important as wisdom, wealth, and health, and in a sense involves them all—this is fanatical, and not to be encouraged or approved. We miss much through our want of separation from the world, and through our deficiency in insulation, or, which is the same word, in isolation. If we go into a science laboratory and examine the great brass machines for holding electrical charges, we find that they are all mounted on glass feet. These are the insulators; and if it were not for them, no electricity would remain on the surface; as it is, electricity is hard enough to keep in charge, even with the best insulators. And we know sometimes what it is to have life and power pass into us from above, but we do not know how to retain it, because we have never learnt true retirement of heart and insulation of life. Some one spoke to John Nelson, making unfavourable comparison of John Wesley with a prominent religious teacher of the day; and Nelson replied, "He has not stayed in the upper room like John Wesley."—*J. Rendel Harris.*

Ver. 38. *Opportunities.*—Cromwell said that it was his aim not only to strike while the iron was hot, but to "make the iron hot by striking!" Some men wait for opportunities, and others make opportunities and circumstances wait upon them.

Vers. 40-45. *Leprosy.*—As to this disease observe: heat, dryness, and dust predispose to diseases of the skin everywhere, and all these causes are especially operative in Syria. Insufficient food assists their action; and boils and sores are apt to fester and poison the system. Leprosy is a disease found over a large tract of the world's surface; it is found all round the shores of the Mediterranean, from Syria to Spain, in a virulent form, and in North and South Africa. It was carried to various countries in Europe by those who returned from the Crusades, and became prevalent even in England, in the times when our forefathers had no butcher meat in winter but what was salted, and little vegetable diet with it. In a form less virulent than in Palestine it exists in Norway, where the government supports several hospitals for lepers, and seeks to prevent the spread of the disease by requiring all afflicted with it to live—unmarried—in one or other of these. Probably salt fish in Norway forms the too exclusive food of the poor, as it also probably did in Palestine in the time of Christ. Mrs. Brassey found it in the islands of the Pacific. It is so common in India that when Lord Lawrence took formal possession of Oude, he made the people promise not to burn their widows, nor slay their children (the girls), nor bury alive their lepers.—*R. Glover.*

*Leprosy.*—You remember the story of the leper which Swinburne has woven into one of his most beautiful, most painfully realistic, poems. He tells about a lady at the French Court in the Middle Ages who was stricken with leprosy. She had been courted, flattered, idolised, and almost worshipped for her wit and beauty by the king, princes, and all the royal train, until she was smitten with leprosy. Then her very lovers hunted her forth as a banned and God-forsaken thing; every door in the great city of Paris was slammed in her face; no one would give her a drop of water or piece of bread; the very children spat in her face, and fled from her as a pestilential thing, until a poor clerk, who had loved the great lady a long way off, and had never spoken to her until then, took her to his house for pity's sake, and nursed her until she died, and he was cast out and cursed himself by all the religious world for doing it.—*J. G. Greenough.*

Ver. 40. *Growth of sin.*—The Jews have a tradition about the growth of leprosy, that it began with the walls of a man's house; then, if he did not repent, it entered his

clothes, till at last it affected his body. So it is with the growth of sin. It begins with neglect of duty, it may be of prayer, or the wailing voice of conscience is unheeded. Habits of sin are formed, till at last the soul that lets God alone is let alone by God.

*No "if" in Jesus.*—A little girl was awakened to anxiety about her soul at a meeting where the story of the leper was told. Well, this dear little girl, who was anxious, said, "I noticed that there was an 'if' in what the man said; but there was no 'if' in what Jesus said. So I went home and took out the 'if,' by my granny's fire-side, and I kuelt down, and I said, 'Lord Jesus, Thou canst. Thou wilt make me clean. I give myself to Thee.'"

Ver. 41. *Hand-help.*—You know what it is to feel a man's hand warm within your own; the cheer that comes from a good hand-shake of an honest heart is what?—why, it is this: that you feel the friend understands you and gives you hope; the spirit of your friend touches your spirit in the hand-grasp, and that hand-shaking is instinct with life. He might write and say good things, and true and helpful to you, but they did not seem to be half as good and true till he took your hand into his own. Or, again, you have need of a physician, and he writes you a prescription. The medicine does not do half so much good as the visit in which he took your weak hand in his own strong one, and shewed you by the way he held it that he meant to bring you through, God helping him. Yes, hope in

the touch of a human hand of love, faith in the touch of a human hand of pity, cheer in the touch of a human hand of power—this is the doctor's gift to his patient, and this was God's gift in Christ to a poor, sin-weary, leprous world that felt there was need of healthier, happier life, and knew not where to turn for it.—*H. D. Ramsley.*

*Christ's answer an exact echo of the request.*—The echo which the mountain gives back to our cry is, as you must often have noticed, calm and pure and musical, however harsh or dissonant or strained our voice may be. Your cry or shout may rise to a piercing scream; but if you wait and listen, it comes back to you with all the discord and excitement strained out of it—comes back at times with a mystical force and sweetness and purity. And when the leper heard his passionate cry come back from the lips of Christ, must there not have been a heavenly sweetness and power in that gracious echo? Must he not have wondered how his poor words should have suddenly grown instinct with a celestial music and energy?—*S. Coe, D.D.*

Ver. 45. *Talkativeness a great evil.*—He that cannot refrain from much speaking is like a city without walls; and less pains in the world a man cannot take than to hold his tongue. Therefore if thou observest this rule in all assemblies, thou shalt seldom err: restrain thy choler; hearken much, and speak little; for the tongue is the instrument of the greatest good and greatest evil that is done in the world (Job ii. 10; James i. 19, 26).—*Sir W. Raleigh.*

## CHAPTER II.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. *It was noised.*—*It was heard, He is in the house, or at home.* Perhaps the house already mentioned, viz. Simon's (i. 29); but more probably His own homestead.

Ver. 4. *Come nigh unto Him.*—*Bring (him) to Him.*

Ver. 5. *Thy sins be.*—*Have been forgiven thee.* Doubtless the man himself was more anxious about his state in the sight of God than about his bodily ailments.

Ver. 7. *Blasphemies.*—*Why doth this man talk thus? He blasphemeth!* They had yet to learn the truth revealed in John v. 19.

Ver. 10. *Power.*—*Authority, i.e. a moral right.* The use of the term "Son of Man" implies a claim on the part of our Lord to forgive sins rather in His mediatorial than in His Divine capacity. And as the Father sent Him vested with this authority, so does He in due time hand it on to His earthly representatives and viceregents (John xx. 21-23).

Ver. 14. *Receipt of custom.*—*Toll-house.* "Capernaum was the landing-place for the many ships which traversed the lake or coasted from town to town; and this not only for those who had business in Capernaum, but for those who would there strike the great road of eastern commerce from Damascus to the harbours of the West."

Ver. 15. *Publicans.*—*Tax-collectors,* the local agents of the Roman "publicani" or revenue officers, who farmed the taxes from the government. Everywhere throughout



the Empire they were hated for their rapacity and dishonesty; but among the Jews especially were they abhorred, as being the representatives of a heathen, hostile, and victorious power.

Ver. 17. **To repentance.**—Omit these words, imported from Luke v. 32.

Ver. 18. **Used to fast.**—*Were fasting*, on that very day.

Ver. 20. **Taken away.** There lurks in the original expression a hint of the violence and pain with which the separation would be fraught.

Ver. 21. **A piece of new cloth.**—*A patch of undressed cloth.* "The patch supposed is an unfulfilled piece of cloth. It is the business of the fuller to make the cloth full and compact by precipitating the process of contraction."

Ver. 23. **Began, as they went, to pluck.** A very good rendering, though free. Cp. Latin "*iter facere*," French "*faire chemin*." From LXX. in Judg. xvii. 8, it is clear that the classical distinction between ὁδὸν ποιεῖν, "to make a road," ὁδὸν ποιεῖσθαι, "to make a journey," must not be pressed in Hellenistic Greek. Such a piece of wanton mischief as "to make a road" through the corn by plucking the ears would never have been tolerated on any day, let alone the Sabbath. Nor would the action attributed to the disciples have sufficed "to make a road": for that, they would have had not to break off the ears, but to break down the stalks.

Ver. 26. **In the days of Abiathar the high priest.**—This seems, at first sight, to contradict 1 Sam. xxi. 1-6, where Ahimelech, the father of Abiathar, is mentioned as the high priest who gave the loaves to David. Many attempts have been made to reconcile the two passages; the most successful is, perhaps, that of Bede: "There is no discrepancy, for both were there, when David came to ask for bread, and received it: that is to say, Ahimelech, the high priest, and Abiathar, his son; but Ahimelech having been slain by Saul (very shortly after), Abiathar fled to David, and became the companion of all his exile afterwards. When he came to the throne, Abiathar himself also received the rank of high priest, and the son became of much greater excellence than the father, and therefore was worthy to be mentioned as the high priest, even during his father's lifetime." An elaborate and ably expressed argument in favour of another explanation will be found in McClellan's *New Testament*, vol. i., pp. 671, 672.

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—12.

(PARALLELS: MATT. ix. 1-8; LUKE v. 17-26.)

*The paralytic borne of four.*—What, it has been asked, was the real purpose of Christ, in those mighty works of healing which consumed so much of His time and strength on earth? What was their relation to His great plan for the world's redemption? Evidently they were not intended to reduce, by direct interference, the sum-total of the world's suffering. Had that been their object, we should have been forced to admit they have quite failed to attain it, for the difference they have made in the amount of human woe is infinitesimal. Moreover, we can see for ourselves that that would not have been a worthy object. Pain and misery are not here for nothing; they are sent here by God Himself, to accomplish a definite work in the world—a good, merciful, and Divine work; and they cannot be spared until that work is completed. We must therefore look elsewhere for the key to our Lord's ministry of healing. And we find it in the incident now before us. "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins" for this purpose it is that Jesus saith to the paralytic, "Arise and walk." Possessing this key to the meaning of Christ's works of mercy, we can follow Him through the long succession of them, as He goes about doing good and healing all that are oppressed of the devil, and can find in them all, not only the sign and proof of His power to save from sin, but the example and illustration of His way of saving. Here we see the two antagonists confronted. In Jesus Christ we see God manifest in the flesh; and in the maladies and visible infirmities of men we see sin manifest in the flesh. In the infinite diversity of these—palsies, blindness, leprosy, epileptic con-

vulsions, demoniac madness—we have set before us, in no dark parable, the Protean phases of human sin. We hear the authoritative word of absolution, cleansing, healing; we witness the act of faith by which he who asks receives. These mighty works are a continual parable, in which the whole life of Christ sets before us the kingdom of heaven in its infinite mercy and all-victorious power.

**I. The faith exhibited by the paralytic's friends.**—It was quite a common occurrence for sick persons seeking help from Christ to be brought into His presence by those who had the care of them (Matt. iv. 24, ix. 32, xiv. 35, 36, xv. 30, xvii. 14-18); and after His ascension the same thing was experienced by the apostles (Acts v. 16). In the present instance the sick man was so utterly helpless that he could only be moved by four persons carrying him on his pallet. But when they reached the house where Jesus was a new difficulty arose, the crowd before the door being too great to admit of their entrance. What was to be done? An ordinary degree of faith would have given up the attempt, and the mournful procession would have returned home as it came. But these men were not so easily daunted. They had the faith which can "remove mountains"; and a mountain of difficulties and discouragements it did indeed remove. "When they could not come nigh unto Him for the press," they went up on the housetop, carrying their burden with them; and being come just over the place where Jesus was, they actually stripped off the roof, perhaps at the risk of causing danger or inconvenience to those below, and let the paralytic down with his pallet into the midst before Jesus. They adopted an expedient which few would have thought of, and still fewer attempted, so earnest was their desire for their friend's recovery, and so strong their confidence in Christ's power and willingness to satisfy that desire. Unbelief would have raised countless objections. "What is there peculiar in your case, that you should take such an extraordinary method of making it known? Others, besides you, have suffering friends. Wait, and take your turn with the rest. Have patience till the crowd disperses, and Jesus is free to attend to you. Or go home now, and return to-morrow. Such behaviour as this makes you look more like housebreakers than humble petitioners. What will the owner of the house say to such wanton destruction of his property? What will the Lord Himself say to this forcible intrusion into His presence?" To every objection urged these men turned a deaf ear; and at length they received their reward for thus taking the kingdom of heaven (as it were) by storm. Jesus recognised in their action, not an outrage upon decency and propriety, but an exceptional expedient to meet exceptional difficulties; not presumptuous forwardness requiring to be checked, but energetic perseverance deserving every encouragement. "Seeing their faith, He said"—what? nothing to *them*, they needed no commendation, they were sufficiently rewarded by hearing His gracious words addressed to their friend; and to *him* Jesus said, *not*, "Son, thou art healed of thine infirmity," *but*, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

**II. The power claimed by the Divine Physician.**—To cleanse the soul as well as to heal the body. It was in the latter capacity only—as the Healer of physical maladies—that Jesus was usually resorted to. There is but one instance on record of His being sought exclusively for the pardon of sins (Luke vii. 37-50). So corrupt had the whole nation of the Jews become, so self-satisfied and unspiritual, that it was the rarest thing possible for any of them to realise that the true mission of Jesus was not to restore the body, but the soul—to save His people from their sins. Now what could bring this truth before them more emphatically than the course He pursued with respect to this paralytic? To another impotent person, whom He had restored, He said, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John v. 14)—implying that his

affliction was the result of his sin. Here the same truth—that spiritual disorders lie at the root of bodily ones—is not only declared, but proved; for instead of saying, “Son, thou art loosed from thine infirmity,” Jesus says, “Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.” As much as to say,—What you really want is not so much bodily health as spiritual soundness. The faculties of your soul are in direr need than the limbs of your body. It would be of little use for Me to raise your physical frame from that pallet, unless I were at the same time to free your higher nature from the bonds that hold it down. The true physician is he who goes to the root of the disorder, who renovates the constitution and makes the patient a new man. That is what I profess to do. You come to me, craving health, and I offer you in addition salvation: “Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.” So spake the Saviour, and doubtless no sooner had He spoken than the plague of the man’s heart was healed. Still no visible effect followed. There he lay, stretched on his pallet, while the scribes were reasoning among themselves upon the astounding claim implied in the words Jesus had just used. But the matter was not to end there. As far as the efficacy of the word spoken was concerned, it was immaterial whether Christ adopted the form, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” or, “Arise and walk.” If He intended to bestow health of body as well as forgiveness of sins, then both would certainly accrue in any case. But it was not immaterial whether the truth expressed in the words, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” should be only taught, or proved as well as taught. It was of the most supreme importance that all men should know that “the Son of Man hath authority on earth to *forgive* sins,” and not merely to remit the punishment of them. Turning, therefore, again to the paralytic, but intending His words more for the objectors than for him, Jesus said, “Arise, and take up thy pallet, and go thy way into thy house.” In these words the Saviour deliberately staked His claim to forgive sins, which the scribes could not test, upon His ability to heal, which they could test. The bodily disorder obeyed the mandate as promptly as the spiritual malady had already done (ver. 12). Thus was manifested, in the most striking manner, the close connection between sin and suffering; and thus was proved the supreme authority of Jesus Christ, not only in the world of nature, but also in the realm of grace.

III. *The parabolic teaching of this miracle.*—While the restoration of fallen humanity must be at the outset an inward and a spiritual thing, it is not complete until the entire man has been renewed by the power of the Incarnate God, who shall transfigure even our body of humiliation unto conformity with His body of glory (Phil. iii. 21).

*The penances of life.* Penance is the necessary consequence, the inseparable accompaniment of sin; and though God’s mercy may pardon and absolve the penitent from the guilt of sin, and so remit its eternal punishment, yet there is a temporal punishment which remains, and must remain, as a witness to the essential evil of sin. When we gaze upon the Cross we see there, in the Passion of Jesus, the great penance of sin which He bore for us; but He has left us a cross to bear, He has called us, as members of His body, to share in His work: and in nothing is this more manifest than in the penance which follows forgiven sin.

1. *We have to bear as a penance the consequences of the sins of the Church* (Col. i. 24).—1. In the sorrows which come to us from the lack of zeal, and therefore lack of power in the Church. 2. In the difficulties with which the Church has to contend in restoring primitive doctrine and practice. 3. In the poverty of the sacramental and spiritual life of the Church in so many of our parishes.



II. We must expect penance to follow even on forgiven sins.—1. The penitent drunkard or roué, who has injured his health by dissipation, has still to bear the consequences of his sins in this life, in physical weakness and disability. 2. The gambler or spendthrift, who has squandered his patrimony in pleasure and excess, has to endure poverty. 3. The criminal, who has lost his character and reputation by legal exposure, though the guilt of his sin be pardoned, has to satisfy the law's demands, and even after that to put up with many a humiliation as the fruit of his sin.

III. This law holds good in every class of sin—that which is known only to God, as well as that which is manifest also before man. And part of our repentance must consist in our willingness, lovingly, cheerfully, and patiently, to bear the penance of forgiven sin. When our Lord absolved this man, He imposed a penance: "Take up thy bed, and go unto thy house"—possibly bringing on him (as it did on another, John v. 10) the criticism and condemnation of his neighbours for his apparent violation of the Sabbath. So with us; when sin is absolved, its temporal results are often left as a penance. 1. In moral weakness, and therefore the necessary surrender of much that is lawful, but for us not expedient, in the avoidance of occasions of temptation, in the giving up of dangerous companions. 2. In the return of the old temptations to worry and distress us, but by God's grace to develop in us the opposite virtue. 3. In having to bear the immediate consequences of our sin, perhaps in poverty, pain, or humiliation.—*A. G. Mortimer, D.D.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *When Christ is in the house*—1. Good men will be attracted to it; 2. Bad men will be benefited in it; 3. Divine benediction will rest upon it; 4. Beneficent ministries will flow from it. Those who have Christ in their home do not act like other people; their motives are purer, their charities more disinterested; they carry with them a radiance which tells of an unworldly source of joy, and proclaims the blessedness of dwelling under the shadow of the Almighty.

*Fragrant flowers cannot be concealed*, and there is a fragrance about Jesus that always reveals His presence. Light cannot be hidden, and there is so much light in Him that it shines out at every window and through every chink and crevice of the house where He abides. Love itself is invisible, but wherever it dwells it produces such effects that its presence soon becomes known. It makes people gentle, kindly, thoughtful, unselfish, and fills them with new desires to do good, and to serve and bless others.—*J. R. Miller, D.D.*

Ver. 3-12. *Palsy* is not so painful as cancer, nor so loathsome as leprosy, nor so fatal as cholera; but it is a disease which renders the patient eminently helpless. There are persons affected with spiritual palsy who never fall into glaring sins, and yet remain inert and without the power of religious decision. It is vain to expect such people to "turn to Christ." It is the mission of the Church to bring to Christ those who are too helpless in spiritual indifference to seek Him of their own accord (Luke xiv. 21-23).—*W. F. Adeney.*

*Mystical sense of the incident.*—In one of the allegories attributed to Hugo de S. Victor the following view is given of the whole history: "The house in which Jesus was entertained stands for the Holy Scripture. The crowd who would not let the paralytic be introduced sets forth the multitude of empty thoughts which hide the sight of God from the sinful soul. The roof is uncovered when the sublime and mystical sense of Scripture is laid open. Here the paralytic is brought into the

presence of Jesus: there his sin is forgiven him, he is called *son*, and commanded to take up his bed and walk; for when a man truly comes to the knowledge of God, God heals him by His grace from all that he has done amiss, and calls him a son by adoption, and commands him to take up his bed by subduing the flesh, and to walk by means of good works."

*Lessons.*—1. Those who would be healed by Christ must come to Him. It is not enough either (1) to hear much of Christ, or (2) to seek help of those who are near Christ. 2. There are some who could never reach Christ unless helped by others. 3. The selfishness of some who are enjoying Christian privileges is one of the greatest impediments to the spread of the blessings of the gospel among those who are as yet without them. (1) There are some so eager to seek consolation and peace for their own souls, that they leave no room for such as are palsied and blind and leprous with sin to receive needful care and help. (2) The sinners and the sick, not the whole and the righteous, have the first claim on Christ's care. The Church should be more solicitous for the salvation of the world, and less absorbed with the desire for her own comfort. 4. Earnest perseverance in seeking Christ will overcome the greatest difficulties. (1) We must expect difficulties—(a) In bringing others to Christ. (b) Possibly in coming to Christ ourselves. (2) Difficulties are sent—(a) To test our earnestness. (b) To awaken our intelligence. (c) To arouse our energy. (3) Christ is always accessible, though not always with ease.

Ver. 5. *Soul-healing first.*—Here we notice a remarkable advance on the teaching accompanying the miracles hitherto recorded by St. Mark. 1. The Saviour, before giving relief to the body, attends to the needs of the soul. We cannot doubt that this paralytic was a conscience-stricken man—that he knew his sufferings were owing to his own misconduct—his loss of vital energy

having been brought about by a course of enfeebling self-indulgence. The Saviour read the mute confession of his penitent heart, and hastened to assure him of its acceptance in the sight of Him who pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe. We are not told what amount of faith he possessed; but however undefined it may have been, it would at any rate include some real conviction of Christ's right to speak in the name of God. 2. The faith of the four bearers is specially emphasised. It is, as Dean Luckock says, a fact full of mystery, but full also of consolation, that not a few of the gifts of healing and restoration were obtained through the faith and prayers, not so much of the sick and afflicted themselves, as of their relations and friends. See Matt. viii. 13, xv. 28; Mark v. 36; John iv. 50. Surely this dependence of man upon his fellow-creatures was intended to foreshadow the great mystery of redemption through Another's blood. And what can be more encouraging for us to know than this: that whenever we bring others to the feet of Jesus to be healed of their soul-sickness—whenever we offer up "the prayer of faith" which we are assured "shall save the sick," we are associating ourselves in deeds of mercy and acts of intercession with the Great High Priest? Dr. Edersheim well draws attention to the fact, that by first speaking forgiveness Christ not only presented the deeper moral aspect of His miracles, as against their ascription to magic or Satanic agency, but also established that very claim, as regarded His person and authority, which it was sought to invalidate. In this forgiveness of sins He presented His person and authority as Divine, and He proved it such by the miracle of healing which immediately followed. Had the two been inverted, there would have been evidence, indeed, of His power, but not of His Divine personality, nor of His having authority to forgive sins; and this, not the doing of miracles, was the real object of His mission.

*The soul's need met by Christ.*—For most of us the wounds of life are seldom wholly clean. Evermore the self-reproach or the inevitable self-accusation mingles with our trouble. There is poison in most of the wounds from which we suffer. We cannot always tell others of the poison which yet we know is lodged in the wound; and yet here we need, perhaps, the greatest sympathy; and here we lie outside our brother's reach. But here the Divine wisdom meets our needs: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." It is like a healing touch, cleaning the edges of the wound.—*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*

Ver. 7. *Forgiveness of sin.*—1. The fact that God forgives sin. (1) Stated (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; 2 Chron. vii. 14; Ps. lxxxvi. 5, cxxx. 4). (2) Illustrated (Ps. xxxii. 5; Matt. ix. 2; Luke vii. 48). 2. The meritorious ground on which God forgives. (1) Christ Jesus (Col. i. 14; 1 John ii. 12; Acts x. 43; Rom. iii. 24, 25). (2) What has Christ done that God forgives for His sake? (Heb. ix. 22-26; 1 Pet. iii. 18; Isa. liii. 5, 6). 3. The conditions in us necessary to forgiveness. (1) Faith (Acts xiii. 38). (2) Repentance (Acts iii. 19). (3) Confession (1 John i. 9). (4) Forsaking sin (Prov. xxviii. 13). 4. The perfection of this forgiveness of God. (1) Sins are blotted out (Isa. xliii. 35). (2) Totally removed from sight (Isa. i. 18). (3) Forgotten for ever (Jer. xxxi. 34; Heb. x. 17). 5. The consequences of forgiveness. We have—(1) Life (Col. ii. 13). (2) Blessedness in the soul (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2; 1 John v. 10). (3) Praise in the heart (Isa. xii. 1). (4) The fear of God (Ps. cxxx. 4; Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9). (5) Reconciliation with God (Luke xv. 12, 32). (6) Peace with God and joy in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. v. 1, 2).—*J. A. R. Dickson.*

The ungodly change the best medicines into poison, and pervert the holiest truths.

The slanderer's custom is, not to try to ascertain the speaker's meaning, but

by some means to pervert and wrest his words.

Ver. 8. *The scribes* had accepted the dogma that access to other men's thoughts was a mark of the Messiah. This sign the Saviour will supply by disclosing to them their unfriendly suspicions. In this way their unbelief and malice were left without excuse. An auspicious opportunity now opened, by which they might enter the realm of truth, but they missed it. At least one sign of the Messiah Jesus had; but they muzzled reason, that she should not speak—they blindfolded understanding, that she might not see. A door of escape from perplexing doubt was opened, but they would rather dwell among the tangled thorns than enter the Eden of light and rest.—*J. T. Davies.*

*Christ's delicate sensibility.*—This fine quality of mind, this delicacy, this sensitiveness which unconsciously photographs character with a look, usually belongs to the more subtle minds of women. It is a Divine quality. Some men have it to a high degree. The Saviour had it to an unspeakable degree. His delicate sensibility, His perfectly sympathetic heart and mind, are as impressive as the conscious quicksilver to catch a faultless image of our life, our troubles, our fears and doubts. His being in heaven does not impair His power to know us and sympathise with us. Therefore He is the true father confessor, the great priest, to whom we can go with assurance.—*R. S. Barrett.*

Ver. 10. *Present pardon for sin taught by Christ.*—1. Christ here enforces a doctrine that had been lost sight of by the Jews—the doctrine of present pardon for sin. They relegated forgiveness to the next world and the day of judgment: He insists that it may be enjoyed now, even while the chastisement is in progress; nay, the chastisement itself may be the means of preparing the heart to receive it. 2. This grace of pardon is dispensed



by Jesus Christ as the Son of Man—as the Head of the new creation of redeemed humanity. It is the virtue that necessarily flows from Him, to all His members, cleansing the soul, instilling peace, and establishing fellowship with God. 3. The ordinary channels for the conveyance of this Divine gift are the ministry and the sacraments of the Church “which is His body.” See John xx. 22, 23; 1 Cor. v. 3-5; 2 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

Ver. 11. *Christ's message to sick souls.*—To every sick soul, whose cure He undertakes, He says, *Surge, tolle, ambula*. Our beds are our natural affections. These He does not bid us cast away, nor burn, nor destroy. Since Christ vouchsafed *induere hominem*, we must not *exuere hominem*. Since Christ invested the nature of man and became man, we must not pretend to divest it and become angels, or flatter ourselves in the merit of mortifications, not enjoined, or of a retiredness, and departing out of the world, in the world, by the withdrawing of ourselves from the offices of mutual society, or an extinguishing of natural affections. But “*Surge*,” says our Saviour—Arise from this bed, sleep not lazily in an over-indulgence to these affections; but “*Ambula*”—

Walk sincerely in thy calling, and thou shalt hear thy Saviour say, “*Non est infirmitas hæc ad mortem*”; these affections—nay, these concupiscences—shall not destroy thee (Matt. xxi. 8; Tit. ii. 14).—*John Donne, D.D.*

Ver. 12. *A new experience.*—That argument was perfectly logical; it was an induction, yet it led them to a result curiously the reverse of theirs who reject miracles for being contrary to experience. “Yes,” they said, “we appeal to experience, but the conclusion is that good deeds which it cannot parallel must come directly from the Giver of all good.” Such good deeds continue. The creed of Christ has reformed Europe, is awakening Asia, has transformed morality, and imposed new virtues on the conscience. It is the one religion for the masses, the lapsed, and indeed the sick in body as truly as in soul; for while science discourses with enthusiasm upon progress by the rejection of the less fit, our faith cherishes these in hospitals, asylums, and retreats, and prospers by lavishing care upon the outcast and rejected of the world. Now this transcends experience: we never saw it on this fashion; it is supernatural.—*Dean Chadwick.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—17.

(PARALLELS: MATT. ix. 9-13; LUKE v. 27-32.)

*The call and feast of Levi.*—1. **A seaside walk hallowed by sacred instruction.** Christ never wasted His time or opportunities in idle reverie or sentimental contemplation of the beauties of nature. He made every scene yield food for mind and soul. And, asks Mr. Spurgeon, can we not do something for Jesus on the sands? If so, let us not miss such a happiness. What situation and surroundings can do better for earnest, loving conversation with our friends concerning the welfare of the soul? A few words about the sea of eternity and its great deeps, a sentence or two upon the broken shells and our frailty, upon the Rock of Ages and the sands of time, may never be forgotten.

11. **A gracious call met by unquestioning obedience.**—It is said that the publicans had tenements or booths erected for them at the foot of bridges, at the mouths of rivers, and by the seashore, where they plied their detested craft—levying from their countrymen the dues of the conqueror, and adding

insult to injury by the extortions they commonly practised. Doubtless the tax-office by the seashore of Capernaum was a very important one, and Levi by this time a wealthy man adding daily to his gains. We need not suppose this was his first encounter with Christ; he may already have been a disciple in a general sense. But now the time has come for him to break away from his old life altogether, to abandon his business and his riches, and to adopt voluntary poverty for the rest of his life. It was a great sacrifice that was demanded of him, and few who heard the call given would be prepared to witness his ready obedience. From his case we may well learn to be very slow in passing judgment on others: however unlikely their character and position in life may appear to us, we know not what methods Christ may be employing to lead them to Himself. From the example of Levi we learn also, that we must be prepared to find our religion a costly thing. Had Levi replied, "Lord, let me continue my profitable business for a while; be satisfied with the homage of my heart," surely Christ would have answered, "Whosoever there be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, and followeth after Me, he cannot be My disciple." Now what was required of Levi is required, in a certain very real sense, of all. In every heart of man there is by nature the love of riches, or of what riches will purchase: covetous desires; love of self-indulgence in some shape or other; longings after something which is just beyond our reach; allowing our minds to run upon schemes which we would carry out if greater means were allowed, rather than reflecting what sort of use we make of what we have already. These are the things we are required to renounce (as Levi to give up his rich profession) for Christ's sake.

**III. A social meal marred by ignoble objections.**—Levi's first act is a manifestation of gratitude. He is eager to extend to others a share of the blessedness that has befallen himself. Accordingly he makes a great feast, and invites his old associates and friends to meet the Master at his house, earnestly desiring that they also may become followers of Christ. And the Master understood and appreciated his motive. As the physician is found where pain and sickness are, so Christ came to the dark, dull, ignorant, lost corners of the earth. Anywhere would He sit down, in any company eat and drink, especially in that of the most despised, because there He found those very souls, the lost and the rejected of men, whom He came expressly to seek, and, if they would, to save from themselves, and their own corrupt and miserable condition. But certain "scribes of the Pharisees," who, intent to pry into Christ's private life, had followed the guests into the dining-room (a common custom in the East), were filled with indignation at His sitting down to meat with a whole company of publicans, and that too (see ver. 18) on one of the fast days of the week. They must needs interpose with their crude criticisms. What cared they that His very presence was medicinal—banishing foul words and thoughts from all breasts save their own—bringing pure air and sunshine into the fetid atmosphere—an outward and visible sign of Divine grace and love? All they concerned themselves with was the maintenance of the barriers erected by their narrow-minded, self-satisfied exclusiveness. They could not conceive of any one sitting at meat with publicans and sinners from higher motives than the mere enjoyment of social intercourse; it never occurred to them that what Christ sought was not viands, but hearts—not to receive the meat that perisheth, but to bestow the true bread from heaven which endureth unto eternal life. Crafty cowards that they were, they uttered their cavil to the disciples rather than to the Master Himself; but Christ at once accepted the challenge and set the matter in the right light. Where else should the physician be found but in the hospital? what else should he be doing but attending to the ailments of his patients?

**IV. A great claim advanced by the criticised Teacher.**—"In calling Himself the Physician of sick souls," says Dean Chadwick, "Jesus made a startling claim, which becomes more emphatic when we observe that He also quoted the words of Hosea, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice' (Matt. ix. 13; Hos. vi. 6). For this expression occurs in that chapter which tells how the Lord Himself hath smitten and will bind us up. And the complaint is just before it, that 'when Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to Assyria, and sent to King Jareb: but he is not able to heal you, neither shall he cure you of your wound' (Hos. v. 13—vi. 1). As the Lord Himself hath torn, so He must heal. Now Jesus comes to that part of Israel which the Pharisees despise for being wounded and diseased, and justifies Himself by words which must, from their context, have reminded every Jew of the declaration that God is the Physician, and it is vain to seek healing elsewhere. And immediately afterwards He claims to be the Bridegroom, whom also Hosea spoke of as Divine. Yet men profess that only in St. John does He advance such claims that we should ask, 'Whom makest Thou Thyself?' Let them try the experiment, then, of putting such words into the lips of any mortal."

**V. A pertinent question raised by puzzled friends.**—It was a very different spirit from that of the scribes which prompted John's disciples (Matt. ix. 14) to ask, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?" They were perplexed to find Jesus, whom their master had taught them to regard with the deepest reverence, feasting on a fast day. They remembered, perhaps, that in the Law the Day of Atonement was the only fast prescribed; and it may have begun to dawn upon them that there was more genuine religion in the non-observance, on the part of Christ and His disciples, of the elaborate system which had by this time degenerated into a pure formality, than in their own strict adherence to it. In reply Jesus takes the opportunity to lay down the principle which should regulate all religious life and its expression—the principle of naturalness, and not artificiality. "There is a time to every purpose under heaven: a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." The Baptist himself had said, with reference to Him, that "the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice." To make that a time of fasting—when they were basking in the sunshine of the Bridegroom's presence—would have been quite incongruous, if not hypocritical. And after all no one need grudge them their day of gladness, for it would soon be succeeded by the night of bereavement—"and then shall they fast." So, we know, it happened in the Church's earliest and purest time. When, *e.g.*, Paul and Barnabas were separated for the work to which the Holy Spirit had called them, the word came to those who were "ministering to the Lord and fasting" (Acts xiii. 2). St. Paul ordained presbyters, after prayer with fasting (Acts xiv. 23); speaks of himself as being "in fastings often" (2 Cor. xi. 27); and speaks of ministers commending themselves to God "in labours, in watchings, and in fastings" (2 Cor. vi. 5). And ever since fasting has been enjoined by the Church as the natural expression of heartfelt contrition for sin, and a fit instrument for the subjection of the lower to the higher nature; but not as a meritorious act entitling him who practises it to the favour of God. This latter was the idea with which fasting had become associated in the minds of the Jews; and in order to stamp it with His disapproval Christ adds the parables or similitudes of the piece of new cloth, and of the new wine that must not be poured into old bottles. Christians were indeed to fast, as Jews had fasted; but with them the ordinance was to have a different and far higher significance. It was no longer to be regarded as part of a law of works, part of a servile duty rendered to a despot; it was now to be a spiritual sacrifice offered by spiritual men to



a spiritual Father, capable with His blessing to be the means of strengthening and purifying the soul. Fitly, therefore, do we pray in the Collect for the First Sunday in Lent, that God would give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey His godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to His honour and glory.

Ver. 17. *Not the righteous, but sinners.*—A motley crowd met at Levi's feast. There were men of his own class—"publicans": the small district officers who collected the tolls and customs for the great officials over them, who farmed the taxes from the Roman Government; a greedy, extortionate set, whose main object in life was to fill their own pockets by cheating those above and below them alike. There were others present even less savoury than these to the nostrils of the *élite* of Capernaum—"sinners": open transgressors who made no pretence of virtue, but sinned as it were "with a cart-rope." With such companions, we are told, "Jesus sat at meat." It was, then, we may be sure, no riotous feast. Jesus was not lending His countenance to their sinful ways. They had been induced to come to see and to hear this wonderful Teacher, and in His presence (depend upon it) they were subdued, restrained, softened. No one would take a liberty or say a vile word before Him. Christian charity would have rejoiced to see these people so changed, even if but for the time. Yet there were some near by who were terribly shocked at the sight. Instead of feeling glad that so many sinners were on the road to amendment through intercourse with Christ, they could only wonder that One so excellent would adventure Himself into such evil company, and run the risk of legal pollution in consequence. The great aim of most of these scribes and Pharisees, in passing through the world, was to hold aloof from everything and everybody that could contaminate them and render them ceremonially unclean. No wonder they were scandalised at the scene in Levi's house, and exclaimed, "How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" They put their angry question to the disciples, but the Lord Himself took up the challenge and gave them their answer. "They that are whole have no need," etc. They were silent. What could they reply? He whose conduct they presumed to criticise had come as a Physician of souls: the idea was quite new to them; they had never looked on publicans and sinners as people who could be cured: of course it was just such depraved persons that were most in need of a Physician. He had "come to call sinners to repentance": certainly it was just people like those around Him that were most in need of such a call. They, the scribes and Pharisees, were "the whole," "the righteous": the Physician and the call were useless to them!

I. Who are the "righteous" whom Christ did not come to call?—1. The expression has been taken to denote those who had truly reformed their lives, and who carefully endeavoured to abstain from all known sin. But though this may be a very correct definition of righteousness in general, it scarcely applies here. Our Lord cannot have meant that there were persons living at that time to whom the call to repentance—the very watchword of Christianity—was altogether unnecessary; for we know that "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" was ordained to be preached to all men without exception. 2. There are two meanings which may be attached to the word "righteous." (1) It may have been used by Christ in a figurative sense, without any reference to the actual state of the world, and without even the supposition of there being any such persons as "the righteous" really in existence. Thus His meaning may have been: "You ask Me why I associate with sinners. I answer, that My commission is to sinners. To them, and for them, I am sent. Righteousness is not the qualification required in those to

whom I am carrying relief. The righteous, therefore, if such there be, are not included in My charge." (2) It may have been intended to carry a reproachful admonition to the hearts of the self-justifying Pharisees. "Yes, I do eat with publicans and sinners. Amongst them, whose guilt is confessed, and who make no pretence of sanctity, I may perhaps find the willing hearer, the patient learner, and the penitent disciple. But upon you whose hearts are blinded by conceit—upon you whose minds are so fully occupied with admiration of your own perfections that there is no room for anything else,—upon you My calls to repentance would be lost; and therefore to you they need not be addressed." Such an interpretation may seem inconsistent with the usual mildness of our Lord's discourse; but it corresponds with the style which He seems to have invariably adopted in addressing the scribes and Pharisees, whose duplicity of character and affectation of sanctity excited His constant displeasure and drew down upon them His severest reprobation.

## II. What is the "repentance" to which Christ came to call sinners?—

1. Repentance is sorrow for sin. The true servant of Christ must ever feel a regret, a deep, abiding regret, that by his transgressions he has offended a God to whom he is so greatly indebted. This feeling will accompany him through life. He will never be found feeding his imagination with the fancied virtues of his heart, or the supposed graces of his conduct. If he does well, he thanks the God who enabled him to do it, and leaves it to that God to accept his humble service—never forgetting that he has been, and is, a sinner. 2. Repentance is also amendment of life. He who regrets that he has sinned will follow up that regret with endeavours to sin no more. Fixing his gaze on the Divine standard of purity, he will strive unceasingly to attain to it. By that standard he will repress his passions, model his desires, guide his judgment, and correct his practice. 3. Repentance is, in short, a change of heart. The whole tide of the penitent's affections is reversed. He loves what he formerly hated, and abhors that which was formerly his delight. Was he but lately captivated with the charm of sinful pleasures? They are now his abomination. Did he dislike and loathe the reasonable service of his Maker and Redeemer? He now finds in it his solace, his hope, and his ground of rejoicing. 4. But is repentance the same in all minds? Far from it. To him who has long held out against the kindly warnings of conscience, and resisted the gentle solicitations of the Spirit of grace, which would have led him into the path of peace—to him, in truth, repentance is a contest, a trial hard and sore, which may more appropriately be called a "conversion." His very principles of action, and the whole temper of his mind, must undergo a complete transformation. But to the avowed and sincere servant of Christ, who has never broken loose from the hallowed circle in which he was placed at baptism, repentance is not a work of so violent a nature; it rather proceeds with the quiet tenor of a gentle stream, ruffled by an occasional unevenness. The mind of the faithful Christian needs not the severe penance of the hackneyed sinner; yet has it reason to be often looking back, confessing its errors, rectifying its conduct, and taking refuge in the "Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness."

III. Consider the necessity and reasonableness of repentance as a condition affixed to salvation. 1. God could not, consistently with every part of His Divine character, bestow eternal life on sinners without repentance. Wisdom, justice, compassion, holiness—all the attributes of Deity—are equally concerned in this work. No measure, therefore, however gracious in its tendency, must be adopted at the suggestion of one of these attributes which may by any possibility interfere with the free exercise of another. A God of mercy may forgive; but a God of wisdom, justice, holiness, must (so to speak) deliberate as to the manner and measure of His forgiveness. Scripture, therefore, in

declaring repentance to be indispensably necessary to salvation, declares that which we can ourselves see to be alone worthy of the Great God, the Giver of all law, and the Just Judge of all the earth. 2. Could we conceive the Son of God, in His capacity of Mediator, interposing His merciful intercession between offended Majesty and unrepentant sinners? A mediator is bound as much to protect the honour of one party as to promote the interests of the other. How then could Jesus, with due regard for His Father's dignity, plead for creatures who still persisted in their rebellion against Him? How could He present His own blood and His own righteousness in behalf of those who still delighted in the enormities which brought Him to the Cross? What would this be but to betray the honour of the Eternal Father, to prostitute the merits of His own death, and to defeat the whole end and purpose of His atonement? 3. The same truth is equally manifest with reference to the sinner himself. For without that alteration and improvement in temper and habits, which by the Holy Spirit is wrought in us through repentance, heaven itself would possess no attraction for fallen man. There would be an absolute contradiction between the nature of the happiness and the person to be admitted to it. The future life of glory is no scene of carnal or corporeal delights—no place of enjoyment for the senses. Its beauties are all of the moral kind; its pleasures such as the spiritually-minded, and none others, can appreciate. The objects of those pleasures are God, ourselves, and our fellow-creatures made perfect with us. The state of the soul will then be such as results from a virtuous and well-governed will, and a noble command of all the inclinations and affections—from an exalted understanding, an enlarged knowledge of God, His attributes and works, and a perfect perception of His wonderful dispensations of wisdom and mercy towards His creatures—from the love of Him, and the ever-pleasing sense of being beloved by Him. This is to be happy, because this is to be good. The contrary state—the state of unrepented sin—is misery, be one's outward circumstances what they may. Heaven itself could not remedy the evil. The one and only source of relief is a change of disposition, of principles, of practices—in one word, repentance.

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 14. *Levi—Matthew.*—There can be no question that the “Levi” of the Second and Third Gospels is the “Matthew” whom the First Evangelist mentions so modestly (Matt. ix. 9). The previous occupation is the same; the call is the same, in time, place, manner, and result; the feast is the same, the guests and spectators, the questions and answers. That our Lord should have bestowed upon Levi the additional name Matthew—“gift of God”—is in accordance with what we are told of most of the other apostles. Respecting his previous history we know nothing; but it is reasonable enough to suppose that, like Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Philip, he had been under the instruc-

tion and discipline of the Baptist, and so was not by any means indifferent to religion. For indications that there had been some unusual religious movement among the publicans as a class, see Matt. xxi. 31; Luke iii. 12, 13, vii. 29.

*“Sitting at the receipt of custom.”*—

1. In business. (1) Exacting more than is fair from employées. (2) Bestowing too great assiduity on the amassing of wealth, to the detriment of both body and soul. 2. In general behaviour. Pride and ambition—demanding obeisance and deference, instead of practising the virtues of humility and meekness. 3. In domestic concerns. Expecting all household arrangements to fit in exactly with one's own convenience



or caprice. 4. In pleasure. Greedily pursuing things that cannot bestow lasting happiness.

*Incidental services to men.*—There is here a lesson to us, that we are to be always on the outlook for the good of men whom we are passing by in the various ways of life. Wherever we see a man we see an opportunity of speaking a word for Christ, and of calling men to a higher life. Courage and prudence are equally required in the discharge of these incidental services. There is a modesty that is immodest, and there is a forwardness which is but the courage of humility.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*The greatness of Divine grace*, which can make of a publican an apostle. 1. According to Jewish traditionalism, the publican was an excommunicated person; but he is now called to assist in founding the communion of Christ. 2. He was an apostate from the people of God; but called to be one of the pillars of the Church of God. 3. He was an instrument of oppression; but becomes an instrument of glorious liberty. 4. He was a stumbling-block and a byword; but becomes a burning and a shining light.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*Christ's diligence an incentive to us.*—Gracious Lord, how diligent art Thou in doing good! how negligent are we in receiving it!—who art fain to look us out, and often makest that which seems mere chance to be a blessed occasion to us of spiritual improvement and of eternal assurance, and turnest accidents into special instances of love and intimacy, if we do but as we should do, regard Thy goings, observe Thy looks, and obey Thy calls.—*A. Littleton, D.D.*

*The Divine call.*—God has created us by His power, and designed us by His wisdom, and preserves us by His mercy for greater and nobler ends than to serve the wicked world and sinful flesh; nor is He wanting by His grace to afford every one sufficient means for his spiritual conduct. He passeth by us often when we are not aware of Him; He looks upon us and we see

Him not; and He calls us by checks of our own conscience, by motions of His Holy Spirit, and by the preaching of His Word: but we stop our ears against Him, and will not hear; and when He cries to us, "Follow Me," we sit still and mind Him not. Oh, let us open our eyes to behold Him, our ears to hear Him, and our hearts to receive Him!—*Ibid.*

Ver. 15. *Levi's feast.*—1. The gratitude of the believing heart for the blessings of salvation will manifest itself in gifts to the Lord:—Zaccheus; Mary of Bethany; the woman that was a sinner; Lydia; the converts on the day of Pentecost. 2. The earnest believer will not be ashamed to confess Christ before his former associates and fellow-workmen. The Church has great need of men like Hedley Vicars, who laid down his Bible on the mess room table in the presence of his brother-officers, as an unmistakable token of the change that had come over him. 3. The converted man will be anxious about the conversion of others. He goes forth as Christ's soldier to win captives from the enemy. Naturally he begins the campaign nearest home. 4. The Christian religion, in order to accomplish its glorious mission, must descend to the most degraded, and by its own inherent power raise them up.

Ver. 17. *Who are "the righteous"?*—A glance at a concordance will prove that both Old and New Testaments constantly speak of men as "righteous." God loves to give us credit for being that which He foresees us capable of becoming, even though we have got only a few steps on the road as yet. "The righteous" are simply those whose *intention* is pure. Sinners we all are, and must be; but wilful sinners we need not be. We may have been thoughtless many a time, and, in consequence, surprised into folly and sin; but if we at once own and lament our frailty, He is not extreme to mark what is done amiss; and whilst by His grace we keep ourselves from pre-

sumptuous sin (Ps. xix. 13) our names are enrolled among the righteous, and He imputes not our iniquities to us.

*The Divine Physician.*—1. Sin is sickness of the most dangerous kind. 2. Repentance is the first step towards the healing of the soul. 3. Christ is the soul's Physician, for whose skill no case is too hard. 4. The more grave our state, the more anxious is Christ to restore us to spiritual health.

*How to do good.*—From this answer we may see—1. Duty of doing good avowedly—not going about it in an indirect manner, as if we were making an experiment, but boldly and distinctly, approaching it with a set purpose of spending our best energy upon it. 2. We may see it to be our duty to go to those who are *least cared for*. We are only working in the line of the Saviour's mission as we begin at the very *lowest* point in the social scale. We cannot do fundamental and permanent good by beginning at the top or in the middle; we must get down to springs and causes, we must

begin at the very deepest point of human apostasy and work our way steadily upward; there is a temptation even in Christian work to stop short of the lowest depth of human necessity. 3. Jesus Christ shows it to be our duty to *associate* with those whom we seek to save: He sat with them, He talked to them, He asked them questions, He made Himself their personal friend, and so attained over them personal supremacy. This practice levels a deadly blow at the theory of doing good by proxy. It is comparatively easy to send other men on errands of mercy, but we are only working in Christ's spirit in so far as we are prepared to go ourselves and openly identify our whole influence with the cause of fallen men. Where there is this intense personal consecration, there will, of course, be a disposition to engage as much co-operation as possible; our duty is to see that we do not find in co-operation an excuse for personal negligence.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 18—22.

(PARALLELS: MATT. ix. 14-17; LUKE v. 33-39.)

*"The children of the bridechamber."*—Marriage, if any time, is a season of festivity and joy. To promote these purposes is the object of inviting certain friends of the bride and bridegroom to attend its celebration. To fast or assume a stern aspect on such an occasion would be little short of an insult. Now Christ here compares Himself to the bridegroom, and His disciples to these companions or friends. The Baptist had suggested the same comparison before (John iii. 29). His disciples stood and heard Him all the time of His sojourning upon earth, and rejoiced greatly because of His voice. That was their holiday-time. If it was not so to the world at large, to the Pharisees, etc., it was because they were not of the Bridegroom's party.

I. *The character of Christians, as "children of the bridechamber."*—This implies—1. Dignity. This is an honourable office. Those whom a man invites to his wedding are not merely his friends, but such friends as he specially delights to honour. And are not Christians highly honoured by being chosen out of the rest of mankind to receive "the light of the knowledge," etc. (2 Cor. iv. 6)? See also 1 Pet. ii. 9; John xv. 16. "This honour have all His saints," by the mere circumstance of their election; but this is greatly enhanced if we consider what it is they are elected to (Rom. viii. 17). The "children of the bridechamber," though they performed many personal offices for the bridegroom, were yet far from being considered in the light of menials, but rather of equals and companions; and so says the Saviour to His disciples (John xv. 14, 15).

2. Subordination to and entire dependence upon Christ. The "children of the bridechamber" have no existence but in relation to the bridegroom (John iii. 29). Even so Christians are absolutely nothing without Christ (John xv. 5). What a ridiculous character is a friend of the bridegroom thrusting himself forward as a principal person, acting an independent part, pretending to be something when he is nothing, instead of taking every opportunity of exalting and magnifying the bridegroom, even at his own expense! And such is the Christian who glories in himself, or fails to refer everything to his Lord and Master. 3. Duties and responsibilities. The "children of the bridechamber" must be always in waiting. While the term of their service lasts they are a part of the family, and the bridegroom's house is their home. So Christians attend continually upon the Saviour; "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth"; wait on Him in the way of His judgments, ordinances, sacraments; ever "looking unto Jesus," and conforming their life and temper to the example set by Him.

II. **The general temper of Christians, as rejoicing in the Lord always** (ver. 19).—1. The presence of the Divine Bridegroom, the converse of Him who spake as never man spake, was to our Lord's immediate followers as a continual feast. 2. The same should now be true of Christians in general; for although, in one sense, the Bridegroom is taken away from us, where is He? See 1 Pet. iii. 22. This cannot be the "taking away" to which He refers, as an occasion of mourning to His friends; since He Himself said, at another time (John xiv. 28). Not only if we love *Him*, but if we love *ourselves*, we shall rejoice at this temporary separation. Whatever accession of dignity or influence accrues to the Bridegroom, His friends are sure to reap the benefit of it. Nor, because He is in heaven, is He the less present with us on earth. This is a great mystery, but an infallible and most comfortable truth. See John xiv. 18, 19; Matt. xxviii. 20.

III. **The occasional seasons when Christians mourn and fast.**—1. This cannot refer to any temporal afflictions; for we are expressly told that no worldly tribulation or distress is able to separate us from the Saviour; but that it is in the nature of such things rather to endear Him to us the more, and to make us the more worthy of His love. 2. We must therefore understand by these words times of spiritual trouble and heaviness, such as will occasionally happen, in this imperfect state, even to those who have the best reason to "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." The Bridegroom Himself had such seasons. See Matt. iv. 1, 2; Mark xiv. 33-36. It is evident, then, that our spiritual garments will not be always white, and that tears may be shed in a bridal chamber. Let us, at such seasons, have recourse to the divinely appointed means of grace, in the assured confidence that, if rightly improved, these occasional interruptions of our wonted cheerfulness will minister to our more abundant consolation in the end. 3. Hitherto we have had in view those dark and distressing times of the soul which come unsought, of which we cannot give a satisfactory account, and which it is our duty as much as possible to bear up against. Other times there are when we should rather invite than resist the entrance of sad thoughts into our hearts. The solemn season of Lent is one of these, and especially the Holy Week with which it ends, when we commemorate the Passion and Death of our Redeemer.

*Fasting.*—It is quite clear, to start with, that no practice of this kind can be an end in itself; it must be a means: equally clear that it must be a spiritual means to a spiritual end—a means by which the spirit may control the body, so as to fashion it into its noble destiny of being a spiritual body; that so the whole man may be moulded for the service, and, in some sense, into the likeness, of God, who is a Spirit,



**I. It is a method of bodily discipline.**—It aims at making us like God, who is a Spirit, and who, as such, is superior to and able to control material things. It trains us in the power of detachment, in the power of saying “No,” not only to the sins of the flesh, but to its indulgences; it recalls the command, “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God,” and the example, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me”; it keeps the body braced for action, and prevents luxuries from growing into necessities. It is in St. Leo’s favourite phrase a “*præsidium*,” a protection to the spirit against the encroachments of the body—asking us, with importunate persistency, whether we have our body well in hand, whether we should be ready for a call to do missionary work in some part of the Master’s kingdom which is not yet civilised. We need this protection for our own sakes, with its reminder of the need of fasting from all sin; and we need it also for the sake of the poor and of the Church, that we may have the means and the will to help their necessities. It is interesting to note that, in the recently discovered *Apology of Aristides*, one of the characteristics attributed to the early Christians is that, if they have not enough money to help a poor brother, they fast two or three days, that they may supply the needy with their necessary food; and St. Leo constantly insists on the duty of a liberal benevolence being the accompaniment of fasting. Detachment, bodily discipline, sympathy with the poor, liberality—these are virtues which spring from fasting; yet most assuredly fasting did not spring from the desire for them. We shall miss its true value if we stop at these. We must go deeper still.

**II. It is also the expression of sorrow**—and, for the Christian, of sorrow for sin: it becomes thus a great training in the true nature of penitence and the right purposes of sorrow. Why was it that our Lord expected His apostles to fast? It was because He was to be taken away from them. And why was He taken away? Because of sin. The Incarnation, which might have been like a perpetual joyous intercourse of Bridegroom and bride, was marred and checked by sin. And in what sense can the Bridegroom be said to be taken away from us now, so that we should mourn? He is gone wherever our sin has grieved His Spirit and driven Him from our hearts. The Christian life should be one of joyous service, of conscious spiritual communion with the Master; and who can say how different it is for many of us, with selfishness and ill-will marring its beauty, so that we get only now and then faint glimpses of what a loyal and loving service of the Master might be? Now the reason of this is sin, our own sin, our past sin, our present sin, whereby we have crucified the Son of God afresh. Friday has to be a Good Friday in every week, giving us time and quiet to learn “that individual and detailed knowledge of our own personal sinfulness, whence the real love of our Redeemer can alone flow.” The most fatal enemy of the spiritual life is self-complacency, and the recurring fast day is our protection against this; “the wound of our just remorse needeth touching” very often. We need to be reminded that nothing less than the Death of the Son of God was sufficient to redeem us from our sins, that those sins were real acts of our own will affecting our whole nature, so that we can never be as though we had not sinned, but must always be penitent before God, always on our guard against the temptations which have proved fatal to us, prepared beforehand for any suffering which God may send us in consequence of our sins, and willing to welcome it as His means of purifying our souls. It is not—God forbid!—that the atonement on the Cross was insufficient; but it is that we ought to feel and act as those whom He has redeemed, to share His hatred for sin, to war against it actively in our own persons—to be like our God, who is a consuming fire.

**III. The reason for common Church fasts on fixed days.**—George Herbert has tersely put it, “The Scriptures bid us fast, the Church says now”; and the

reason for this is not only that so brother helps brother to keep up his spiritual life, and that the common action of the Church is more prevailing with God, like its common prayer, but it is also a reminder that we have to be not self-centred in our penitence, but to fast and sorrow for the sins and shortcomings of the whole Church.

**IV. Fasting does not end in itself;** it is always in the Church's system a preparation. It was the preparation for baptism as early as the second century. An almost universal instinct has regarded it as the fit approach to the Holy Communion. After Friday comes Sunday with its worship and Communion. After Lent comes Easter. This fact seems to say: grief, weakness, sin—these are not the *end*. We sorrow that we may know the power of the Resurrection; we feel the touch of human weakness that we may rest on spiritual strength, and know that power is perfected in weakness; we recall our sinfulness that we may realise the love of the Atonement. Fasting does for us the work which that good man, the clergyman, did for the simple maiden in Tennyson's poem: "He showed me all the mercy, *for he showed me all the sin*." And it keeps joy *Christian*. Christian joy has to stand in relation to Christian grief. If we have learnt to grieve for sin, we shall rejoice for the triumph of righteousness. If we have mourned for the failures of the Church, our joy will rise above selfish family prosperity into delight in the progress of the Church.

**V. Two words of caution.** 1. Remember Mr. Keble's advice, "Keep a medical conscience, either in your own bosom or in that of some friend who may be trusted." "Fasting sometimes causes a distressing reaction: if you have reason to fear that, you had better use hard and unpleasant diet than actually going without." 2. It was especially in connexion with fasting that our Lord insisted on the break with the old spirit of Judaism. Our fasting may not be a mere form—a desire to win God's favour—a trust in ourselves. It must be done in love and gratitude, with desire to imitate our Lord, with prayer to Him that it may be united with His fasting, and get all its virtue from Him. — *W. Lock.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

**Ver. 18. A common evil.**—It is a Pharisaic and very common evil that men are very much more troubled about setting others right in their living than about correcting their own. — *Starke.*

*The busybody* begins by talking about others, and comes afterwards to himself, but makes the best of his own case (1 Tim. iv. 8). — *P. Quesnel.*

*All men not alike.*—It is spiritual pride when, in matters which God has left to our freedom, people try to make others regulate themselves by their rules. What benefits one man's soul may harm another's.

**Ver. 20. The right use and end of fasting.**—When godly and well-dis-

posed persons observe such days of abstinence in a right manner, and to a right end; when they look upon fasting not as an essential part of natural or revealed religion, but only as an auxiliary or instrumental duty; when they do not rest in it as absolutely and in itself good, but make use of it as a proper help for the better performance of those duties, which are strictly and properly acts of religious worship; when they do not acquiesce in the bare outward performance of this duty, or think they have discharged it as they ought, till by the use of these means, and God's blessing upon them, they have attained those graces, to which these means ought to be subservient; when

they strive thereby to mortify the flesh, and to subdue the lusts thereof, to spiritualise the soul, and to dispose it for more exalted acts of devotion; when to these ends they choose to set apart those days which they find have been set apart to the same ends by the generality of Christians in all ages; when they are willing to keep up a custom which they find hath been kept up by all or by most of the Churches of God; when they dutifully comply with the usages of that Church in which they live, and are afraid of despising the lawful commands of their superiors; when, how strict soever they are towards themselves, they are not rigorous in their censures of others who do not think themselves bound to the same observances; when they do not hope by abstinence at some times of the year to compound for criminal excesses at other times, but are temperate and sober through the whole course of their lives, and at some stated periods sequester themselves more than usually from the business and from the pleasures of this world, that they may more freely and uninterruptedly attend to the concerns of the next; when they are in their consciences fully persuaded that one day or one meat of itself is not more holy, more pure, or more clean than another, but that all days and all meats be of their own nature of one equal purity, cleanness, and holiness, and yet on some days abstain from some meats not as in themselves unlawful, but as less subservient to the keeping under the body and bringing it into subjection; when they do not rigorously tie themselves up to fixed and unchangeable rules, from which they may in no case swerve, to the ensnaring and perplexing of their consciences, but in things of themselves indifferent use such a latitude as may neither entrench too much on Christian liberty, nor on the other side open a gap to licentiousness,—when, I say, sober, judicious, and devout Christians observe the fasts of the Church with these cautions, restrictions, and limita-

tions, such an observance cannot be justly accused of superstition, cannot indeed be condemned without superstition. Such an abstinence as this our Church recommends; such, if we shall practise with the same intentions, with the same piety and moderation, as she recommends it, we shall thereby reap great benefit to our souls, and the better prepare and dispose them for the reception of God's grace here, and the communication of His glory in the world to come.—*Bishop Smalridge.*

Ver. 21. *Consequences of false conservatism in the Church.*—1. These attempts at tailoring in spiritual matters are opposed even to common sense and every-day practice. 2. The old forms are destroyed by the new life, and the new life by the old forms. 3. The work of destruction is continued while they clamour against destruction, until the new and the old are finally separated.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*The threefold mark of the new life.*—

1. It assumes a definite outward form. 2. It cannot continue in the false and antiquated forms. 3. It must create for itself corresponding forms.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 22. *Form and spirit.*—As the wineskin retains the wine, so are feelings and aspirations aided, and even preserved, by suitable external forms. Without these emotion would lose itself for want of restraint, wasted, like spilt wine, by diffuseness. And if the forms are unsuitable and outworn, the same calamity happens—the strong, new feelings break through them, “and the wine perisheth, and the skins.” In this respect how many a sad experience of the Church attests the wisdom of her Lord; what losses have been suffered in the struggle between forms that had stiffened into archaic ceremonialism and new zeal demanding scope for its energy—between the antiquated phrases of a bygone age and the new experience, knowledge, and requirements of the next—between the frosty precisions of unsympathetic age and the innocent warmth and



freshness of the young, too often, alas! lost to their Master in passionate revolt against restraints which He neither imposed nor smiled upon.—*Dean Chudwick.*

*Christian development.*—The old stage-coaches could not have been utilised for steam-engines; the new

thoughts respecting locomotion required new machinery. So did the thoughts of Christ require new habits and practices. These were not fully initiated by Christ, but He laid down the basis of all subsequent Christian development.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses 23—28.*

(PARALLELS: MATT. xii. 1-8; LUKE vi. 1-5.)

*The Sabbath and its Lord.*—The malignity of the Pharisees being now fully aroused by Christ's disregard of their scrupulosities and conventionalities, they are henceforth to be found constantly dogging His steps, watching His every action, catching up His every word, in order that His influence with the people may be neutralised, or at least lessened. Especially on the Sabbath were they careful to shadow Him wherever He went, for there was no clearer proof of His divergence from current tradition than as regards the observance of the rest-day. "On no other subject," says Dr. Edersheim, "is Rabbinic teaching more painfully minute and more manifestly incongruous to its professed object. For if we rightly apprehend what underlay the complicated and intolerably burdensome laws of Pharisaic Sabbath observance, it was to secure, negatively, absolute rest from all labour, and, positively, to make the Sabbath a delight. The Mishnah includes Sabbath desecration among those most heinous crimes for which a man was to be stoned. This, then, was their first care: by a series of complicated ordinances to make a breach of the Sabbath rest impossible. The next object was, in a similarly external manner, to make the Sabbath a delight. A special Sabbath dress, the best that could be procured; the choicest food, even though a man had to work for it all the week, or public charity were to supply it,—such were some of the means by which the day was to be honoured, and men were to find pleasure therein. The strangest stories are told how, by the purchase of the most expensive dishes, the pious poor had gained unspeakable merit, and obtained, even on earth, Heaven's manifest reward. And yet, by the side of these and similar strange and sad misdirections of piety, we come also upon that which is touching, beautiful, and even spiritual. On the Sabbath there must be no mourning, for to the Sabbath applies this saying: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. x. 22). The object which Rabbinism vainly strove to attain by the multiplication of restrictions, Christ set Himself to accomplish by a totally different method. Brushing aside all later accretions of traditionalism, He provoked the inquiry, What was the original law and design of the Sabbath?

1. **The accusation by the Pharisees.**—Right gladly would they have accused the disciples of theft, had there been the slightest vestige of excuse for doing so; but the law made express provision for the satisfying of hunger when passing through corn-fields (Deut. xxiii. 25). But that any one should take advantage of this merciful provision on the Sabbath horrified them—or they pretended it did. According to them, such an action involved at least two sins: the plucking the ears was equivalent to reaping, the rubbing in the hands to sifting or winnowing! And yet, had the owner of the field wanted, in harvest-time, to shift any of his sheaves, he had only to lay on each a spoon in common

use, when, in order to remove the spoon, he might also remove the sheaf on which it lay! To men who spent their time in the invention and study of puerilities of this kind, it mattered nothing that the disciples were really hungry, and that abstinence would occasion far greater unrest of body and mind than the infinitesimal exertion of plucking and rubbing a few ears of corn. "Sabbath means rest—rest of spirit as well as of body—rest from all that is carnal and selfish, and the surrender of the whole being to God in spiritual worship. But these zealots were restless in their endeavours to overcome One whom they hated, and their hearts were rankling with jealousy and envy, instead of swelling with praise and prayer." How pitiful it is when men seek to substitute elaborate ceremonial for the sacrifice of the inner being!

**II. The answer of our Lord.**—Christ meets the objectors on their own ground, and shows how, even if it were admitted that the disciples had broken the letter of the law (which they had not done, but only the Rabbinic gloss), they were amply justified in doing so. An eminent scholar, on being asked his opinion of certain classical editors, once replied, "They know the rules; but they do not know when the rules are right, and when they are wrong." So it was with these Pharisees. They had every minutest detail of the Mosaic Law at their fingers' ends, so far as the mere letter was concerned; and even their excessive zeal in interpreting and expanding its provisions need not have led to any serious harm, had they only exercised the same care with respect to its spiritual side. But this they had now lost sight of altogether. Christ, therefore, in His reply, ignoring all minor issues, insistence upon which would only have been certain to prejudice and embitter them still further, brings them face to face with the great principle which they themselves admitted—that when two laws clash, the higher one overrides the lower. "A single Rabbinic prohibition is not to be heeded," they said, "where a graver matter is in question." Bearing this in mind, we can see how impregnable was the position that Christ took up on behalf of His disciples. David and his followers, when at extremity, had eaten the shewbread, which it was not lawful for them to eat, but only for the priests, and yet they were held blameless, Jewish tradition vindicating their conduct on the plea that "danger of life superseded the law." From St. Matthew (xii. 5) we learn that our Lord followed this up with another argument drawn from the Temple usages. "What," He asks, "were the multiplied sacrifices, and incense-burnings, and washings, but so many breaches of the letter of the law? Had they not given birth to the proverb, 'There is no Sabbatical rest observed in the sanctuary'?—and yet no one ever thought of blaming the priests." Nor does any blame attach to the disciples, who were but acting upon the same principle—that the greater obligation overrules the lesser, that all ceremonial observance is subordinate to human necessity, that God prefers mercy to sacrifice.

**III. The true law of Sabbath observance.**—1. "The Sabbath was made." The setting apart of one day in seven for rest from labour and special religious effort is no haphazard arrangement of human invention, but God's own beneficent gift to His weary creatures. It is stamped with Divine sanctity and authority. 2. "The Sabbath was made for man"—to subserve his highest interests and promote his spiritual welfare. Now since man is a complex creature, with a tripartite nature (1 Thess. v. 23), it is necessary to provide for him as such, not ignoring either his physical or his social or his religious needs, otherwise the end for which the Sabbath was made will be frustrated. It is related in the life of a pious Presbyterian minister of this generation, how his home looked upon a public park in the suburbs of a crowded city, and how, when he saw some of his fellow-citizens taking a quiet walk for the sake of fresh air and innocent relaxation on a Sunday afternoon, he wondered

that the earth did not open her mouth and swallow them up! The same spirit was manifested by the inhabitants of St. Kilda a few years ago, when they subjected some shipwrecked people to agonies of hunger rather than permit a ship, with provisions on board, to land on what they called "the Sabbath," *i.e.* the Lord's Day! Well might they have been asked, "Have ye never read what the Lord's disciples did, when they had need and were hungry; how, going through the corn-fields on the Sabbath, they plucked the ears of corn, and rubbed them in their hands, and ate; and how the Lord defended them for so doing, and declared that the Sabbath is not man's master, but his servant?" And as to the other instance mentioned of Sabbatic intolerance, may we not say, with Dean Luckock, that it is not only permissible but a manifest duty to furnish the masses with the means of bodily recreation, and to draw them from their squalid homes into pure air which will invigorate the frame; and no less a duty to elevate their tastes, to offer them, as far as possible, variety of scene and relief from the monotony of their daily drudgery?

IV. **The supremacy of the Son of Man over the Sabbath.**—"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath"; and as its Lord He exercises the right to eliminate from it all that is merely Judaic, and to re-establish it in its original simplicity and benignity. During His earthly ministry He makes it the day not of idle self-contemplation, but of gracious words and blessed deeds. Then after death—His mission to the spirits in Hades having been accomplished on the Sabbath (1 Pet. iii. 18-20, iv. 6)—He chooses the first day of the week for His resurrection; and that day has ever since been observed by His followers as the Lord's Day—His peculiar possession, and their peculiar privilege—a day which is a thousand times more precious and sacred to them than the Sabbath could ever be to a Jew. The Sabbath was but the shadow of good things yet to come; on the Lord's Day especially (though far from exclusively) the believer realises that these good things have now come, and that he is already a partaker of them in Christ. He therefore regards the weekly rest-day as a boon of unspeakable value, for which he is indebted to his Saviour. To him, indeed, all days are equally holy: he does not imagine for a moment that God requires of him a better service or a purer soul on one than on another; but while striving to serve God truly all the days of his life, he thanks God particularly for every opportunity afforded him of withdrawing for a season from the turmoil of worldly business, and devoting himself without distraction to the things of the Lord.

Vers. 23-28. *The Sabbath and the Lord's Day.*—I. The first principle embodied in the Lord's Day is **the duty of consecrating a certain proportion of time, at least one-seventh, to the especial service of God.** This principle is common to the Jewish Sabbath and to the Christian Lord's Day. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day" means for us Christians, "Remember that thou keep holy one day in seven." Keep the day holy; consecrate it. Such consecration implies two things: a separation of the thing consecrated from all others, and the communication to it of a quality of holiness or purity. To this idea of the especial consecration of a section of time, it is objected that in a true Christian life all time is consecrated. The answer is that the larger obligation of love is not ignored because the smaller one of duty is insisted on. All a Christian's time is properly consecrated time; but practically, in many cases, none would be consecrated unless an effort were made to mark a certain proportion of it by a special consecration. The case is parallel to that of prayer. Our Lord says that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. The apostle says, "Pray without ceasing." And the life of a good Christian is, no doubt, a continuous prayer: the spirit of prayer penetrates and hallows it; each duty is inter-



twined with acts of the soul which raise it above this earthly scene to the throne and presence of Christ. But, for all that, in all Christian lives stated times of prayer, private as well as public, are practically necessary, if the practice of prayer is to be consistently maintained. And in like manner the especial consecration of one day in seven does not involve an implied rejection of the rights of Jesus Christ over all Christian time. It is like those small payments known to the law, which do not profess to give an equivalent for that which they represent, but only technically to acknowledge a much larger claim; it implies that all our time belongs to God, although, considering our weakness, He graciously accepts a prescribed instalment or section of it. And apart from its importance in the life of the servants of God, the public setting apart of a certain measure of time to God's service is a witness to His claims borne before the world, and calculated to strike the imaginations of men. From this point of view, our English Sunday, whatever may be said about mistakes in the detail of its observance, is a national blessing. It brings the existence and claims of God before the minds even of those who do not make a good use of it. And religious foreigners have not seldom told us that it fills them with envy and admiration; and that we shall do well to guard that which, once lost, is certain to be well-nigh, if not altogether, irrecoverable.

II. A second principle represented in the Lord's Day is **the periodical suspension of human toil**. This is closely connected with that of the consecration of time. In order to make the day, by this prohibition, unlike other days, in order to make room for the acknowledgment of God on it, ordinary occupations are suspended. Here again we have a second principle common to the Jewish Sabbath and to the Christian Lord's Day. In the Old Testament a variety of particular occupations are explicitly forbidden on the Sabbath: sowing and reaping, gathering wood and kindling a fire for cooking, holding markets, every kind of trade, pressing grapes, carrying any sort of burden. In a later age the Pharisees added largely to these prohibitions. They held it unlawful to pluck an ear of corn in passing through a corn-field, or to assist and relieve the sick; although they ruled that an animal which had fallen into a ditch might be helped out, that guests might be invited to an entertainment, and that a child of eight days old might be circumcised. There were thirty-nine Rabbinical prohibitions on the Sabbath, of which one limited a Sabbath-day's journey to two thousand cubits, and another forbade killing even the most dangerous vermin, while a third proscribed the use of a wooden leg, or a crutch, or a purse. These and other prohibitions illustrate the tendency of mere law to become, sooner or later, through excessive technicality, the caricature and the ruin of moral principle. And it was against these Pharisaic perversions of the Sabbath that our Lord protested by act and word, reminding His countrymen that the Sabbath was made for the moral good of man, and not man for the later legal theory of the Sabbath. But the broad principle of abstinence from labour, however misrepresented in the later Jewish practice, was itself sacred; and it passed into the Christian observance of the Lord's Day. We see this plainly in notices of the observance in the early times of the Christian Church. Thus Tertullian, writing at the end of the second century, calls the day both Sunday and the Lord's Day; says that it is a day of joy, and that to fast on it is wrong; yet adds that "business is put off on it, lest we give place to the devil." And thus when, under Constantine, the Imperial Government had acknowledged the faith of Christ, and Christianity made itself felt in the principles of legislation, provision was very soon made for the observance of the Lord's Day. Even four years before the Council of Nicæa, Constantine issued an edict ordering the judges, the town populations, the artists and tradesmen of all kinds, to cease from labour on the Lord's Day. He allows agricultural

labour to go on, if the safety of crops or the health of cattle depends on it. And when we examine the Codes of the Emperors Theodosius and Justinian, in which the experience and traditions of the great Roman lawyers are combined with and modified by the softening influences of Christianity, we find that the observance of the Lord's Day is carefully provided for. Works of necessity, whether civil or agricultural, are allowed; others are forbidden. Public spectacles of all kinds and the games of the circus are suppressed. And the great teachers of the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries did what they could to second the imperial legislation by exhorting the faithful to abstain from works or sights which profaned the Holy Day of the Christian week. This insistence on a day of freedom from earthly labour is not inconsistent with a recognition of the dignity and the claims of labour. On the contrary, it protects labour, by arresting the excessive expenditure of human strength; and it raises and consecrates labour by leading the workman's mind to acknowledge the Source and Support of his exertions. It is sometimes asked why this abstinence from labour should be dictated to us; why each man cannot make a Sunday for himself, when his strength or health demands it. The answer is, Because, in a busy, highly worked community, unless all are to abstain from work, none will abstain; since, in point of fact, none can afford to abstain. This is the principle of the Bank holidays: the State comes in to do for labour four times a year, on a small scale, what the Church does on a large scale every week; it essays to make a general rest from work possible by an external sanction. If the sanction of the Sunday rest from toil were to be withdrawn, it would, in a civilisation like ours, go hard, first with labour, and then, at no distant interval, with capital. The dignity and obligation of labour are sufficiently recognised in the precept, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do"; and the health and happiness and moral well-being of the labourer are secured by a seventh day, in which the labourer is to "do no manner of work."

III. Thus the Sabbath and the Lord's Day agree in affirming two principles: the hallowing a seventh part of time, and the obligation of abstinence from servile work on one day in seven. **But are the days identical? May we rightly call the Lord's Day the Sabbath?** These questions must be answered in the negative. Observe that the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord's Day, while agreeing in affirming two principles, differ in two noteworthy respects. First, they differ, as has already been implied, in being kept on distinct days. The Sabbath was kept on the last day of the week: the Lord's Day is kept on the first. The change was made because there was an imperative reason for making it. For the Lord's Day and the Sabbath Day differ, secondly, in the reason or motive for observing them. The Sabbath was the weekly commemoration of the finished work of God. It brought before the mind of the Jew the ineffable majesty of the Great Creator, between whom and the noblest work of His hands there yawns an impassable abyss. Thus the Sabbath observance, apart from its directly sanctifying effect upon individual life, was the great protection to the Jews against the idolatry with which they came in contact in Egypt, in Phœnicia, in Babylon, and against the Greek modes of thought which tried them so sorely at Alexandria and in Palestine under the Macedonian kings of a later time. The Christian motive for observing the Lord's Day is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. That truth is to the Christian Creed what the creation of the world out of nothing is to the Jewish. The Lord's Day marks the completed Redemption, as the Sabbath had marked the completed Creation. The Resurrection is also the fundamental truth on which Christianity rests; and thus it is as much insisted on by the Christian apostles as is God's creation of all things by the Jewish prophets. Not, of course, that

the creation of all things by God is less precious to the Christian than to the Jew; but it is more taken for granted. In Christian eyes the creation of the world of nature is eclipsed by the creation of the world of grace; and of this last creation the Resurrection is the warrant. The Jewish Sabbath stands in the same relation to the Lord's Day as does Circumcision to Christian Baptism, as does the Paschal Lamb to the Holy Communion, as does the Law to the Gospel. It is a shadow of a good thing to come. It is only perpetuated by being transfigured, or rather it is so transfigured as to have parted with its identity. Christians stand no longer at the foot of Sinai, but by the empty tomb in the garden outside Jerusalem.

IV. The cessation of ordinary work is not enjoined upon Christians only that they may while away the time, or spend it in aimless self-pleasing, or in something worse. **The Lord's Day is the day upon which our Lord Jesus Christ has a first claim.** On this great day every instructed Christian thinks of Him as completing the work of our redemption; as vindicating His character as a Teacher of absolute truth; as triumphing over His enemies; as conquering death in that nature which had hitherto always been subject to its empire; as designing, now that He has overcome the sharpness of death, to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. It is unlike any other in the week; and the sense of this finds its natural expression in prayer and praise. A well-spent Lord's Day should always begin with that supreme act of Christian worship in which we meet Jesus verily and indeed, the only public service known to the early and Apostolic Church—the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Redeemer. What the practice of our fathers in the faith was within a few years after the apostles had gone to their rest, we learn from the celebrated letter of Pliny to Trajan. "The Christians," he says, "are accustomed to meet together on a stated day, before it is light, and to sing hymns to Christ as God, and to bind themselves by a Sacrament, not for any wicked purpose; but never to commit fraud, theft, or adultery—never to break their word, nor to refuse, when called upon, to deliver up any trust." This was his impression as a heathen, looking at the sacred service from without, and gathering its nature from Christian language about it which he imperfectly understood. How Sunday was kept by Christians about the year 140 is very fully described by Justin Martyr. He says that on that day there was an assembly of all Christians who lived either in town or country; that the writings of the apostles and prophets were read; and that prayer was offered, and alms were collected, and the Holy Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood was celebrated. As we descend the stream of time, illustrations become more numerous. But in the early Church of Christ it was taken for granted that a Christian would observe the Lord's Day, first of all, by taking part in that solemn Sacrament and Service which the Lord had Himself ordained. Those who begin their Sundays with the Holy Communion know one of the deepest meanings of that promise, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." Not that it is wise or reverent to suppose that all the religious duties of a Sunday can be properly discharged before breakfast, and that the rest of the day may be spent as we like. No Christian whose heart is in the right place will think this. Later opportunities of public prayer and of instruction in the faith and duty of a Christian will be made the most of, as may be possible for each. Especially should an effort be made on every Sunday in the year to learn some portion of the will of God more perfectly than before; some truth or aspect of His revelation of Himself in the Gospel; some Christian duty, as taught by the example or the words of Christ. Without a positive effort of this kind a Sunday is a lost Sunday: we shall think of it thus in eternity. Where there is the will to seek truth and wisdom there is no difficulty about the way: books,



friends, sermons, are at hand. We have but to be in earnest, and all will follow. When the religious obligations of Sunday have been complied with, there are duties of human brotherhood which may well find a place in it: kind deeds and words to friends, visits to the sick, acts of consolation for the poor, are in keeping with the spirit of the day. Above all, it should be made a bright as well as a solemn day for children: first solemn, but then and always bright, so that in their after-life they may look back on the Sundays of childhood as its happiest days. And in itself there would be no harm if, for those who live in towns, museums and picture-galleries could be open on Sundays, just as the fields and the gardens are open to those who live in the country; for Art, like Nature, is to each one of us what we bring to it. The danger of such proposals is that, to realise them, Sunday labour must be employed, in some cases on a very considerable scale; and this would too easily lead the way to its employment for other and general purposes, and so to the abandonment of an essential characteristic of the Lord's Day.—*Canon Liddon.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 23. *Lessons.*—1. Christ never bribes men to become His disciples. Although when occasion arose, He would work a miracle to feed a multitude, He here leaves His followers to stay their hunger as best they may. 2. It is not said that Christ Himself partook of this frugal meal. Probably He refrained from doing so, at the cost of personal discomfort, rather than give offence to His enemies. 3. But while thus declining to use His own right to the full, He will not hinder others from the enjoyment of theirs. On this principle St. Paul afterwards acted (1 Cor. x.).

*The disciples were poor*; but they preferred to suffer hunger with Christ rather than enjoy affluence without Him.—*Heubner.*

Ver. 24. *Lessons.*—He who has only the knowledge without the spirit of the law very often opposes when he thinks he is defending it. 2. Pharisaical pride makes men set themselves up for judges of everything, and require an account of everything to be given them. 3. When a man is once full of himself, he decides confidently, especially when it is to condemn others. 4. Those who love to domineer are not content to exercise their authority upon their own disciples, but would

fain bring those of others under their dominion.—*P. Quesnel.*

Why did not these Pharisees give them bread, and so prevent their doing that to which they objected? We might also fairly ask, How came they to see the disciples? Did they not break the Sabbath by setting a watch over them?

Ver. 25. *Superficial reading prejudicial.*—An old preacher was once heard to say, "The Word has mighty free course among many nowadays, for it goes in at one of their ears and out at the other." So it seems to be with some readers—they read a very great deal, and yet they do not read anything. Their eye glances, but their mind never rests. The soul does not light upon the truth and stay there. It flits over the landscape as a bird might do, but builds no nest. Such reading is worse than useless; it is positively prejudicial to the mind.

Ver. 27. "*The Sabbath was made for man.*"—1. For man as man—whether Jew or Gentile. It was set apart by Divine sanction from the beginning, not merely from the time of Moses, when God only reminded His people of that which had existed long before. The law of six days'

work and one day's rest is wrought into the very constitution of humanity, and cannot be ignored with impunity. 2. For man as he is—not for man in a fancied state of perfection. To worship God every day in spirit and truth, to raise each day to the level of a Sabbath, is no doubt the goal to be aimed at; but if such a commandment had been given to the Jews, and no day specially separated from the others, they would have ended by reducing all to a dead level of worldliness. They needed the Sabbath as a help to their devotion, and we in this busy age need it too. From the consecration of one day to God, we learn by degrees to consecrate to Him every day, every hour.

*Reasons for Sabbath observance.*—The following are the reasons given in the Old Testament for the observance of the Sabbath: 1. In memory of the Creation, and of God's rest from His work (Exod. xx. 11). 2. To protect those whose time is at the disposal of others (Deut. v. 14). 3. In memory of the deliverance of God's people (Deut. v. 15). 4. As a sign between God and His people of their sanctification by Him (Ezek. xx. 12). So now the weekly Lord's Day, with its Eucharistic celebration, is the great testimony to the Church's perpetual union with her once crucified but now reigning Head.

*The consecration of one day in seven* to uses other and more sacred than those of the rest, is ordained by a law which lies a long way behind either the religion of Christ or the religion of Moses. That law is embedded in the very constitution, physical, mental, and moral, of human nature; and as human nature has awakened to its consciousness and its significance, just in that proportion has it ennobled and advanced itself. The first nations in the family of nations to-day are those who, whether early and quickly, or slowly and late, have learned to hallow one day and keep it sacred; and the loftiest achievements in arms, in literature, in science, in philanthropy,

in missionary enterprise, and in social advancement, belong to that Anglo-Saxon people whose observance of Sunday is to-day the wonder and the admiration of every intelligent traveller.—*Bishop H. C. Potter.*

*The Continental Sunday a failure.*—It is one of the most remarkable facts of our time that those older nations from which some of us propose to borrow our habit of disregard for the Lord's Day are striving at this very moment with most impressive earnestness to restore the earlier sacredness of that day. In Germany, in Switzerland, and in France there are already organisations of serious and thoughtful men who are seeking to banish the Continental Sunday. They have seen, on the one hand, as any one may see in France to-day, that the removal of the sacred sanctions, which with us hold the first day of the week in a kind of chaste reserve, have eventuated not merely in degrading it to the level of a vulgar holiday, but also of degrading and enslaving him for whom its privileges were, most of all, designed—the wearied, over-worked, and poorly-paid labouring man. He is a person out of whom the most is to be got, and if he can work six days he may as well work the seventh also, so long as there is nothing to forbid it. Such a condition of things may not directly threaten those of us who are protected by wealth from the necessities of daily labour; but if ours is this more favoured condition, all the more do we owe it to our brother-man who is less favoured to see to it that he shall have every sanction with which the law can furnish him to guard his day of rest from being perverted and revolutionised into a day of toil. And if he himself does not see that the more we assimilate Sunday to other days by the amusements, the occupations, the teaching and reading and thinking with which we fill it, the greater is the danger that ultimately we shall lose it altogether, the more earnestly are we bound to strive to disseminate

those sounder ideas which shall set this first day of the week and its devout observance before our fellow-men and women of the labouring classes in its true light, and so help and teach them how not to lose but to keep it. We may declaim as we please in behalf of a philosophy which makes all days holy to the universal worship of humanity by making no day holy to the worship of a personal God; but the decay of stated times and seasons for the offering of that worship presages a day when neither God nor man, neither life nor property, neither human weakness nor human needs, have any rights nor any scantiest respect. To learn that fact we need go back no further than the history of France in 1788.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 28. *Son of Man*.—1. Glorious name that, which Jesus Himself loved most—indeed, we may say to the exclusion of all others—“*Son of MAN*”; thus identified with the whole race in its joys and sorrows and manifold experiences: a sympathetic bond of union linking to Himself each member of the wide human family. 2. Christ—the Incarnate God—had not only assumed the form and designation of the “*Son of Man*,” but, as such, He belonged to no exclusive or distinctive nationality. He claimed and asserted a worldwide brotherhood. The sun in the material heavens is the illuminator of no one specific region or section, but of the entire earth: every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue are served heirs to his radiance—“nothing hid from the heat thereof.” So was Christ “the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” He took in all climes, all blood, all ages, all civilisations.—*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*

*Christ's lordship over the Sabbath*.—Nothing can show the Divine nature of our Lord more clearly than that He is above such a law of God, so that He should modify it, relax it, change it at His pleasure. He exercised but a small part of this authority

when He freed His disciples from the yoke of its burdensome Pharisaic observance. He exercised His lordship over the day far more royally when He by His Spirit made the day of His resurrection the weekly religious festival of His Church. By this He gave it altogether a new character. Henceforth it is a day not of mere rest, but of renewed life—the life of His own resurrection; and so its characteristic ordinance is not the slaying of beasts, but the life-giving celebration of the Sacrament of His own Risen Body.—*M. F. Sadler.*

*The freedom of Christ's service*.—The service of God, and the service of the Temple, by universal consent, superseded the Sabbath law. But Christ was greater than the Temple, and His service more truly that of God, and higher than that of the outward Temple—and the Sabbath was intended for man, to serve God: therefore Christ and His service were superior to the Sabbath law. Thus much would be intelligible to these Pharisees, although they would not receive it, because they believed not on Him as the Sent of God. But to us the words mean more than this. They preach not only that the service of Christ is that of God, but that, even more than in the Temple, all of work or of liberty is lawful which this service requires. We are free while we are doing anything for Christ: God loves mercy, and demands not sacrifice; His sacrifice is the service of Christ, in heart, and life, and work. We are not free to do anything we please; but we are free to do anything needful or helpful, while we are doing any service to Christ. He is the Lord of the Sabbath, whom we serve in and through the Sabbath. And even this is significant, that, when designating Himself Lord of the Sabbath, it is as “the Son of Man.” It shows that the narrow Judaistic form regarding the day and the manner of observance is enlarged into the wider Law, which applies to all humanity. Under the New Testament the Sabbath has, as



the Church, become Catholic, and its Lord is Christ as the Son of Man, to whom the Body Catholic offers the acceptable service of heart and life.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

*Christians are lords of the Sabbath.*—We also are, in our measure, “lords of the Sabbath,” which was made for man; we have a Christian liberty, which, remember, implies a deep Christian responsibility, to regulate our method of observing the Sabbath, under God’s general laws, so as to make it to ourselves not a burden, but an exceeding spiritual blessing. This liberty indeed is ours, only in proportion as we are living as real members of Christ, having His mind, and in our deeds being like Him. So

far as we are sinful we forfeit our privileges, even as a life of slavery makes men unfit for freedom; we may require the constraints of a law, and lose the full enjoyment, the perfect blessing, of the Lord’s Day. But still Christ’s words show us what we should aim at and desire; they teach us how to look on our Sundays, as blessings for which we may thank God; and stir us up to use them, not by any formal rules, still less by any gloom or compulsion, but freely and thankfully, for our blessing and happiness both of body and soul. They were made for us; and we, by God’s grace, are lords over them, only under Him who is God and Lord of all.—*Bishop Barry.*

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER II.

*Ver. 1. Christ’s presence cannot be kept secret.*—We cannot give lodging and entertainment to such a personage as He is without it being seen of others. He is not an ordinary visitor; and though no state ceremonies accompany Him, there is that about His whole customs which arrests attention. We may have occasional visitors whose amiable dispositions and influences refine and improve us; but they cannot do for us what a visit from Christ does. They cannot, by their own strength and love, confer on us spiritual blessings. His company is the best; it not only makes time pass pleasantly, but it makes us ready for eternity. His songs not only make the heart merry, but they make it *new*. Now this cannot be, and nothing of it be seen or known outside. We soon tell upon ourselves; we soon let out the secret; and it is then “noised abroad” that we have Him beneath our roof-tree. Oh, happy is that house in which He lodges! —*John Macfarlane, LL.D.*

*Christ’s presence manifest.*—“Travelling on the Lake Lugano,” says one, “we heard one morning the swell of the nightingale’s song, and the oars were stilled on the blue lake as we listened to the silver sounds. We could not see a single bird, nor do I know that we wished to see—we were so content with the sweetness of the music.” Even so it is with our Lord; we may enter a house where He is loved, and we may hear nothing concerning Christ, and yet we may perceive clearly enough that He is there; a holy influence streaming through their actions pervades the household, so that if Jesus be

unseen, it is clear that He is not unknown. So anywhere that Jesus is, and though you do not actually hear His name, yet the sweet influence which flows from His love will be plainly enough discernible.

*Ver. 3. Moral paralysis.*—In one of our city hospitals a young woman of beautiful face and form had lain motionless for many months. Except for the brightness of her face and the action of the hands, her body was apparently dead. Yet she spoke with great confidence of her restoration to health at some future time, and was enthusiastic in planning good works then to be executed. A physician remarked that it was the saddest case he had ever witnessed. It was a paralysis, not of the flesh, but of the mind: it was a *moral paralysis*. The will itself had lost its power of action. She could plan for the future, but not *will* anything at the present moment. After a few months the inactivity bred fatal disorder, and she passed away. This a picture of the moral paralysis of many.

*Man’s helplessness.*—How helpless man is to save himself from the disease of sin may be illustrated by *Æschylus’ Prometheus Bound*; by Virgil’s *Laocoön* with his sons in the coils of the great serpent; by the young man in Paris, who was examining a guillotine, and, from curiosity, lay down on the plank under the knife, and found himself fastened there, unable to escape without aid from others.

*Ver. 4. Eastern roofs.*—“When I lived at

Ægina," says Hartley, in his *Travels*, "I used to look up not infrequently at the roof above my head, and contemplate how easily the whole transaction of the paralytic might take place. The roof was made in the following manner:—A layer of reeds, of a large species, was placed upon the rafters; on these a quantity of heather was strewed; on the heather earth was deposited, and beaten down into a solid mass. Now what difficulty would there be in removing first the earth, next the heather, and then the reeds? Nor would the difficulty be increased if the earth had a pavement of tiling laid upon it. No inconvenience could result to the persons in the house from the removal of the tiles and earth; for the heather and reeds would stop anything that might otherwise fall down, and would be removed last of all."

*The power of faith.*—Faith can make a passage through the sea, level martial ramparts, make iron swim, trample on fire unhurt. It will find a key to open every lock, a saw that can cut through every iron bar. As water will, in some way, find its proper level, so true faith will find its way to its source—even to Christ.

Ver. 5. *Progression in Christ's miracles.*—The day begins softly, beautifully, progressively. In the early morn it peeps from behind the hills, tinges the sky and the sea with its rosy colours, and advances until there is cloudless splendour, so that the day, when at its meridian, may be said to be perfect. Thus softly, beautifully, and progressively rose the Sun of Righteousness on the dark world of humanity. His first miracle was one of quiet and gentle beneficence: He turned water into wine; and thus He brightened domestic joys before He went forth to mitigate human sorrows. After this He went about all Galilee, healing all manner of bodily disease among the people. Then He rose higher in miracle-working—He re-throned prostrated reason, and set demoniacs in their right mind. At last He manifested forth His glory as God by pardoning the soul. Indeed, just as every human disease was a symbol of the moral condition of the soul, so every miracle He wrought on the body was a token of what He would do for the soul, and what, in fact, He did in the majority of instances: hence His miracles were double—body and soul were healed at the same time, as in this case.

*The good news of pardon.*—When Bishop Patteson was quite young, he used to say that he wished to be ordained, because he longed to say the Absolution, and thus "make people so happy." The son of one, and the nephew of another, of England's most eminent judges, he knew well what a verdict of "not guilty" implied to a prisoner

on his trial; and this knowledge he had been taught to apply to spiritual matters.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Christ the Pardoner.*—One of our modern novelists has written the story of a man who was haunted with remorse for a particular sin; and though sometimes weeks would pass without the thought of it, yet every now and then the ghost of the old transgression would rise before him to his infinite discomfort. It is the story of almost every human life. Sin is not something which a man commits and has done with it. It becomes a part of his being. His moral fibre is changed; his moral stamina is weakened. A traveller soon drives through the malarious air of the Roman Campagna, and is out of the poisonous atmosphere; but during his brief transit disease has found its way into his blood; and even though he sits under the cool shadow of the Alps, or on the shore of the blue Mediterranean, the inward fever rages and burns. A man sins, and in sinning introduces disease into his moral nature; and even though he abandons his evil courses the old malady works on. The forgiveness of sin which is so thorough and central that it rids a man of the power and guilt of sin—who is competent to give us that? No specific of man's devising, no course of moral treatment, can effect that. There is only One, Jesus Christ, who has power on earth to forgive sin in that complete and efficient fashion. And that is His chief glory, and constitutes His principal claim upon us.

Ver. 14. *Attractive power of Christ.*—If steel filings be mixed with dirt and a magnet be applied, it will attract the steel to itself, and draw it away from the grosser particles. Thus does Christ draw men from that which is earthly and polluting.

*Christ our Guide.*—With my brother I was once climbing the Cima di Jazi, one of the mountains in the chain of Monta Rosa. When nearly at the top, we entered a dense fog. Presently our guides faced right about and grounded their axes on the frozen snowed slope. My brother, seeing the slope still beyond, and not knowing it was merely the cornice overhanging a precipice of several thousand feet, rushed onward. I shall never forget their cry of agonised warning. He stood a moment on the very summit, and then, the snow yielding, he began to fall through. One of the guides, at great risk, had rushed after him, and seizing him by the coat, drew him down to a place of safety. So Christ is our Guide amid the mists and the difficult places of life. It is not ours to go before Him. Where He leads we may go. When He stops, we should stop. It is at our peril if we go a step beyond.—*Newman Hall.*

*God often calls men in strange places.*—

Not in the house of prayer, not under the preaching of the Word; but when all these things have been absent, and all surrounding circumstances have seemed most adverse to the work of grace, that grace has put forth its power. The tavern, the theatre, the ball-room, the gaming-house, the race-course, and other similar haunts of worldliness and sin, have sometimes been the scenes of God's converting grace. As an old writer says: "Our calling is uncertain in respect of place, for God calls some from their ships, and some from their shops; some from under the hedges, and others from the market; so that if a man can but make out unto his own soul that he is certainly called, the time when and the place where matter little."

*Christ's effectual call.*—We read in classic story how the lyre of Orpheus enchanted with its music not only the wild beasts, but the very trees and rocks upon Olympus, so that they moved from their places to follow him; so Christ, our heavenly Orpheus, with the music of His gracious speech, draws after Him those less susceptible to benign influences than beasts and trees and stones, even poor, hardened, senseless, sinful souls. Let Him but strike His golden harp, and whisper in thy heart, "Come, follow Me," and thou, like another Matthew, shalt be won.

*"Follow Me."*—Aulus Gellius tells us a story of one Protagoras, who, being poor, was forced for a livelihood to carry burdens. One day he had got some chumps on his back, which he was bringing to town for fuel. Democritus, a famed philosopher, meets him; admiring his contrivance, how he got that rude parcel of stuff together in that order, for his further satisfaction bids him lay down his bundle, untie it, and do it up again. He does so, and that with such method and artifice, that the philosopher perceiving by this essay he had a logical head and an ingeny fit for science, told him, "Come, young man, you must along with me; you are fit for greater and better things than this you are about." He takes him along with him, maintains him, breeds him up in philosophy, wherein he proved subtle, and in some degree eminent. It was the same case with Matthew here, if I may make comparison. He was puzzling and pelting himself in a sorry employment. Our Saviour comes by and finds him sitting at it; He fetches him off with a gracious call, as if He had said, "Come, leave this sordid and scandalous employ; I have greater and nobler service for thee. Follow Me."—*A. Littleton, D.D.*

*Ver. 15. Sinners drawn to Christ.*—Traveling along a country road on a hot summer's day, you may have noticed the people before you turn aside at a certain point and gather

around something that was yet hidden from you. You knew at once that it was a clear, cold spring that drew them all together there. Each of them wanted something which that spring could supply. Or you have seen iron filings leap up and cling to the poles of a magnet when it was brought near to them. The attraction of the magnet drew them to itself. So sinners were drawn to Jesus; they felt that in Him was all fulness, and that He could supply their need.

*The converted seeking to convert others.*—It is thought that Matthew wished to introduce his friends and old companions to Christ. Colonel Gardiner, after his conversion, finding that his former friends considered him mad, invited them to meet him, and pleaded the cause of religion with such force and strength of reasoning, that one cut short the argument with saying, "We thought this man mad, and he is in good earnest proving us to be so."

*Ver. 16. Religious prejudice.*—Happily, in our age and country, though prejudice of class is not yet done away with, there is not much left to give an idea of the intensity of the religious prejudices and sectarian divisions of the ancient East. Giant Prejudice now can do little more than sit grinning at the pilgrims and biting his nails at them because he cannot come at them; and it is hard for modern occidental imagination to conceive of him as he moved and acted in full social and political power. But one example will do. Read Leger's *Histoire de Piémont*, and learn the cruelty, brutality, and obscenity practised on the poor Waldenses; and then imagine how the Pharisees felt toward Jesus, who received sinners and ate with them. The lower the grade of knowledge and culture (and most of the Pharisees were probably illiterate), so much the more savage were the feelings and actions of the persecutors, though their cruelty was not refined in proportion to their savageness. In modern times this religious prejudice exists, and strongly too. There are certain sects still in Palestine and Syria who will buy and sell with you, but not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. They are often the dirtiest of the dirty, but they hold your clean touch defilement. As when, in certain parts of India, one ventures to clear his throat in the street, all the shops near by are immediately shut up; so, in some places, an unlucky touch by a Christian will defile a handful of figs, a bunch of grapes, a melon; or perhaps even a whole basket of fruit.

*Ver. 17. God welcomes sinners.*—As the story goes, a certain generous but eccentric nobleman sometimes asked not only the



high-born and wealthy but the squalid and poor to his feasts. Previous to one of these occasions, a courtier had the misfortune to tear or to stain his dress. How was he to appear now at his benefactor's table? After some thought he came to a wise conclusion. These were his words, "If I cannot go as a nobleman I will go as a beggar." Say the same to Him who spreads the gospel feast. Never mind though you cannot go as a saint; go as a sinner. You will be welcome.

*Christ saves sinners.*—Luther says: "Once upon a time the devil said to me, 'Martin Luther, you are a great sinner, and you will be damned!' 'Stop! stop!' said I; 'one thing at a time. I am a great sinner, it is true, though you have no right to tell me of it. I confess it. What next?' 'Therefore you will be damned.' 'That is not good reasoning. It is true I am a great sinner, but it is written, 'Jesus Christ came to save sinners'; therefore *I shall be saved!* Now go your way.' So I cut the devil off with his own sword, and he went away mourning because he could not cast me down by calling me a sinner."

*All are sinners.*—I remember a gentleman taking exception to an address based upon the words of God concerning Jew and Gentile, *that both are guilty before God*. I remarked, "But the Word of God distinctly says, 'There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God'" (Rom. iii. 22, 23). My friend replied, "Do you mean to say that there is no difference between an honest man and a dishonest one, between an intemperate man and a sober man?" "No," I remarked; "I did not affirm that there was no room for comparison between such cases; but my position is, that if two men were standing here together, one an intemperate man and the other a sober man, I should say of the one, 'This man is an intemperate sinner, the other is a sober sinner.'" My friend did not know how to meet the difficulty, but answered, "Well, I don't like such teaching." Very quietly I replied, "Then I will make some concession, and meet your difficulty. I will admit that many are 'superior sinners,' and that you are a superior sinner." I shall not soon forget my friend's expression of countenance when he had taken stock of the argument.—*Henry Varley*.

*Ver. 21. External reform insufficient.*—We may try from without to make human character lovely; but there is sin in its very fibre, and the blemishes will ever work out and mar all. The only way is to have a new heart, and then the beauty will be real and will endure. A mother lost by death a lovely and precious child—her only child. To occupy her heart and hand in some way about her vanished treasure, and thus fill the empty hours, she took up a photograph

of her child and began to touch it with her skilful fingers. Soon, as she wrought, the features became almost lifelike. The picture was then laid away for a few days, and when she sought it again the eyes were dimmed, and the face was marred with ugly blotches. Patiently she went over it a second time, and the bewitching beauty came again. A second time it was laid away, and again the blotches appeared. There was something wrong in the paper on which the photograph had been taken. There were chemicals lurking in it which in some way marred the delicate colours, and no amount of repainting could correct the faults. So is it in human lives. No outside reform is enough, for all the while the heart is evil within, and it sends up its pollution, staining the fairest beauty. The change that is permanent must be wrought in the heart.—*J. R. Miller, D.D.*

*Ver. 27. Benefit of the rest-day.*—Man! man! this is the great creator of wealth. The difference between the soil of Campania and Spitzbergen is insignificant compared with the difference presented by two countries—the one inhabited by men full of moral and physical vigour, the other by beings plunged in an intellectual decrepitude. Hence it is that we are not impoverished, but on the contrary enriched by this seventh day, which we have for so many years devoted to rest. This day is not lost. While the machinery is stopped, while the car rests on the road, while the treasury is silent, while the smoke ceases to rise from the chimney of the factory, the nation enriches itself none the less than during the working days of the week. Man, the machine of all machines, the one by the side of which all the inventions of the Watts and the Arkwrights are as nothing, is recuperating and gaining strength so well, that on Monday he returns to his work with his mind clearer, with more courage for his work, and with renewed vigour. I will never believe that that which renders a people stronger, wiser, and better can ever turn to its impoverishment.—In *The Life of Frank Buckland*, the eminent naturalist, who devoted himself so thoroughly to the scientific and practical study of the river and sea-fisheries of Great Britain, there is the following testimony to the value of Sabbath rest: "*March 1866.*—I am now working from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and then a bit in the evening—fourteen hours a day; but, thank God, it does not hurt me. I should, however, collapse if it were not for Sunday. The machinery has time to get cool, the mill-wheel ceases to patter the water, the mill-head is ponded up, and the superfluous water let off by an easy, quiet current, which leads to things above."—In one of the most densely populated parts of the city

a gentleman lately visited the house of a poor, hard-working, infidel cobbler. The man was busy at his last, and had scarce time to look up at his unwelcome visitor. "That is hard work." "It is, sir." "For how many hours a day have you to labour here—twelve?" "Yes, and more, sir. I am never off this seat under a fourteen or fifteen hours' spell of it." "That is sore toil for a bit of bread." "Indeed it is, sir; and very thankful am I when the week's end comes. *What would become of me, and the likes of me, without that rest?*" "And who, friend, think you, gave you that rest? Came it by accident, or arrangement, or how?" There came no answer to that: the cobbler hung his head; the man was honest; the sceptic was ashamed.—An agricultural labourer named Alègre, about sixty years of age, was arrested during the French Revolution, and put in prison for not having worked on a Sunday. A week after his release he presented himself, dressed in his Sunday clothes, before the Committee. On being asked what he wanted, he replied that he was getting old, and that when he had worked all the week *he was tired out and wanted rest*, so that if he went to labour on Sunday he should rob his employer, and that therefore he preferred to come and be put in prison. The Committee, who no doubt thought the man had come to make

a denunciation, were nonplussed at the strange humour of this singular request, shrugged their shoulders, and bade their petitioner go about his business.—William Wilberforce said, "I can truly declare that to me the Sabbath has been invaluable." When Sir Samuel Romilly, Solicitor-General during Fox's administration, committed suicide, Mr. Wilberforce said, "If he had suffered his mind to enjoy such occasional remission, it is highly probable that the strings of life would never have snapped from over-tension." The celebrated Castle-reagh, who was Foreign Secretary in 1812, committed suicide in 1822. Wilberforce said, "Poor fellow! he was certainly deranged—the effect probably of continual wear of the mind and the non-observance of the Sabbath."—After all, the question is not so much one of the safety and well-being of life and property as of the higher well-being of the personal soul. A great statesman is reported to have said to one who sought of him an interview concerning secular matters on the Lord's Day: "*I must keep one day in which to realise what I am and where I am going!*"—*A world without a Sabbath*, says Mr. Beecher, would be like a man without a smile, like a summer without flowers, like a homestead without a garden. It is the joyous day of the whole week.

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## CHAPTER III.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 5. **With anger, being grieved.**—His anger would be roused as He thought of the evil resulting to others from the bigotry and tyranny of their spirit; His pity, as He thought of the moral loss suffered by themselves in consequence thereof. **Hardness.**—*Dulness.* "Not the obduracy which cannot be impressed, but the obtuseness which cannot perceive." They were blind to their own blindness, deaf to their own deafness; and also blind and deaf to the needs and woes of others. Compassion and kindness of heart were as much dried up in them as this man's hand was in him.

Ver. 7. Mark several times notes the Saviour's seasons of retirement from public notice, either (as in this instance) to escape the pursuit of enemies, or for rest, or to pray, or for conference with His disciples. See vi. 31, 46, vii. 24, ix. 2, xiv. 32-35.

Ver. 14. **Ordained.**—*Made, or set apart.* The twelve were now singled out for closer attendance upon Him, and special instruction in His method of work. Their solemn "ordination" came afterwards (John xx. 21, 22). **Twelve.**—"The number twelve symbolises perfection and universality. Three indicates what is Divine; four, created things. Three multiplied by four gives twelve, the number of those who were to go forth as apostles into the four quarters of the world—called to the faith of the Holy Trinity."

Ver. 17. **Boanerges.**—It is uncertain whether each of them bore the name "Son of thunder," or whether "Boanerges" was a dual name given to the pair, as the name "Dioscouri" was given to Castor and Pollux. It is also uncertain why the brothers were thus named; but we may be sure it was not in any case intended as a term of reproach. Perhaps it was suggested by some peculiarity in voice or manner of delivery which arrested attention and lent conviction to their preaching.

Ver. 18. **Simon the Canaanite.**—*Canaanite*, or *Canaanæan*. An Aramaic word, signifying *zealot*. See Matt. x. 4; Luke vi. 15; Acts i. 13. Jerome says that his name preserves a reference to the place of his birth (Cana) as well as to his zeal. "No name is more striking in the list than that of Simon the Zealot, for to none of the twelve could the contrast be so vivid between their former and their new position. What revolution of thought and heart could be greater than that which had thus changed into a follower of Jesus one of the fierce war-party of the day, which looked on the presence of Rome in the Holy Land as treason against the majesty of Jehovah, a party fanatical in their Jewish strictures and exclusiveness?"

Ver. 19. **Betrayed.**—*Delivered*, or *surrendered*. Same word used in Rom. viii. 32 of the Father's surrender of the Son, whom He "delivered" into the power of men, in order that He might "deliver" mankind from the power of Satan.

Ver. 21. **His friends.** His kinsfolk or near relatives. **Beside Himself.**—In an ecstatic state. They thought He was carried away by His zeal and devotion beyond all self-control.

Ver. 22. **Beelzebub.**—*Beelzebub*, meaning either "lord of the dwelling," or "lord of filth"—the title of a heathen deity, to whom the Jews ascribed lordship over evil spirits. "He hath Beelzebub" is equivalent to saying, "He is possessed not merely by a demon, but by Satan himself."

Ver. 27. **Spoil his goods.**—*Snatch and carry off his vessels*, or household treasures.

Ver. 29. **Hath never forgiveness.** *Hath not forgiveness unto the age* or æon of Messiah's reign. **In danger of eternal damnation.**—*In the grip of an age-long sin*. None of the agencies employed by God for the conversion of sinners up to the time of the Second Advent are powerful enough to rescue such an one from the awful state to which he has reduced himself by his own deliberate choice. Here the Saviour leaves the matter, without revealing anything as to the man's ultimate fate or the ministries of the future world.

Ver. 31. **His brethren.**—The word means nothing more than His "nearest male relatives." Probably either the sons of Joseph by a previous marriage, or of the Mary mentioned in Mark xv. 40. It is inconceivable that our Lord should have assigned His mother to the care of John, if she was the mother of four other sons.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—6.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xii. 9-14; LUKE vi. 6-11.)

*A withered hand restored.* Again it is Sabbath—the day on which the Divine Son of Man specially delighted to bring joy to the souls and healing to the bodies of His suffering brethren. Again, too, the sleuth-hounds are on His track, thirsting for His blood; and this time the trap is so skilfully baited that they feel sure of securing their prey. Had the ingenuity of these religionists only been directed aright—had they thought half as much of the salvation of sinners as they did of the safeguarding of their wire-drawn casuistries—what a mighty work for God could have been accomplished! But, alas! religion meant to them nothing but a round of outward observances; they were "blind as owls to the light of God and true goodness, keen-sighted as hawks for trivial breaches of their cobweb regulations, and cruel as vultures to tear with beak and claw." Here they stand now in the synagogue, gloating over the spectacle of affliction that meets their eye, for they are convinced that Jesus will set at nought any number of Sabbath traditions, rather than fail to relieve misery.

I. **A pitiable object.** The man's right hand was not only paralysed in the sinews, but withered up and hopeless. An old tradition recorded in the Gospel of the Nazarenes and Ebionites adds, that he was a stonemason by trade, and that he besought Jesus to heal him and relieve him from having to beg for his bread. Let us hope, for the credit of human nature, that those are mistaken who believe the Pharisees themselves had bribed the man to come there and place himself in the Saviour's way.

II. **A fearless challenge.**—Jesus, fully aware of their hostile thoughts, as if to anticipate any action on their part, and make the matter as public as possible, bids the man—"Stand forth." All is now excitement and expectation



The looks of the audience pass rapidly from Jesus to the man, and from the man to the Pharisees, in the consciousness that a crisis is near. Then Jesus propounds a question, which in the nature of things admits of but one answer—a question which completely cuts the ground from under His enemies' feet: "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" According to them, only actual danger to life warranted a breach of the Sabbath law. Jesus meets them, therefore, on their own terms, and shows how their own principles lead logically to the kind of Sabbath work that they condemn: "All good-doing to men's bodies lies on the line of life; all withholding of good-doing lies on the line of killing, or of death. If it would be wrong, in the absence of higher claims, to withhold the good-doing that would save life, it must also be wrong, when the higher claims are still absent, to withhold the good-doing that may be needed to develop life into its fulness of vigour and beauty." Such reasoning was unanswerable, and could only be met by silence on the part of those who were not prepared to endorse and commend it. If there was still a soft spot in the heart of any one of them, surely Christ's words must have suggested the contrast between their murderous designs on Him, and His zeal for the life and health of all men. But no such thought seems to have entered their minds. They are speechless—not with conviction, but with conscious defeat.

**III. A Divine look.**—St. Mark, who, more than any other Evangelist, records the lights and shadows that swept over the Saviour's countenance, tells us that "He looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts." They had set themselves to prove Him guilty at all hazards, and the result was a gradual hardening of the heart, rendering them impervious to all spiritual impressions and impulses. The anger of Christ is directed against their sinful opposition to the truth, which was quite inexcusable; but His loving heart is full of commiseration for the men themselves, whose state of insensibility to goodness and compassion was truly perilous and pitiable.

**IV. A life-giving command.**—"Stretch forth thine hand." There is no manipulation of the stricken member, no touch, no word of healing even; nothing but a simple direction to the man to do what was forbidden to none, but what had been up to that moment impossible to him; and in doing as he was bid, in making the effort to obey, the vitality returned, "and his hand was restored whole as the other." Thus calmly and quietly does Jesus show His enemies how easy it is for Him to evade their best-laid plots; thus incontrovertibly does He prove His superiority to all the powers of evil. Observe, too, "that no offence to hypocrites, no danger to Himself, prevented Jesus from removing human suffering. Also that He expects from the man a certain co-operation involving faith; he must stand forth in the midst; every one must see his unhappiness; he is to assume a position which will become ridiculous unless a miracle is wrought. Then he must make an effort. In the act of stretching forth his hand, the strength to stretch it forth is given; but he would not have tried the experiment unless he trusted before he discovered the power. Such is the faith demanded of our sin-stricken and helpless souls—a faith which confesses its wretchedness, believes in the goodwill of God and the promises of Christ, and receives the experience of blessing through having acted on the belief that already the blessing is a fact in the Divine volition."

**V. An unnatural alliance.**—The Pharisees—their pride humbled, their hopes disappointed, their hearts full of futile rage—first commune one with another as to what course they should now pursue, and then, calling together the Herodians, "took counsel against Him, how they might destroy Him." Misfortune, according to an old saw, often brings men into strange company, and certainly it was so in this case. "In theology the Herodians, so far as they

held any theological opinions, fraternised with the Sadducees, the latitudinarians of that day; in politics they were adherents of Herod Antipas, and so advocates of the Roman domination. To both these the Pharisees were diametrically opposed. Yet now they enter into an unholy alliance with those who were at once their political opponents and religious antagonists." Lifelong hatreds are put aside for the nonce, in order that they may make common cause "against the Lord, and against His Anointed."

**Lessons.**—1. As Christ's actions and words were watched, so are ours. 2. As this man found Christ in the sanctuary, so may we. 3. As this man took Christ at His word, and did exactly what He bade him, so let us. 4. Let us learn further—(1) For our warning—that not to do good is to do evil; and (2) For our encouragement—that whatever good we attempt to do, Christ's power will work with us and in us.

**Ver. 5. *Hardness of heart.***—It is a true rule and maxim in divinity that sins against the gospel are most heinous and of greatest provocation. As the sweetest and strongest wine makes the sourest and sharpest vinegar, so the choicest favours, if they be despised, provoke in God the greatest displeasure. Now the main sin against the gospel and grace of God is obstinate impenitency and unbelief—when we repel and put off from us the offers of God's grace. And the root of that is the spirit of obduration and hardness of heart, when our hearts stand it out with God, and will not give way to the work of His grace. And this evil, more or less, in some degree or other, is in all men naturally; and this is that which our Saviour here discovers and reproves in His present auditors.

**I. The parties affected with this great evil.**—1. Look upon them as men in the state of nature, and then the observation is thus much—that naturally every man's heart is full of hardness and obstinacy. God created us in a far different condition: our spirits were tender; our hearts, hearts of flesh; the whole frame and disposition of our souls pliant and yielding to every good motion. But now, as sin hath depraved and corrupted us, our hearts are not stirred or affected with any of these. Doth God appear to us, we take no notice of Him: doth He send His Word to us, we give no credit to it, it seems a fable to us: doth He command us, we will not obey Him: doth He promise us, we will not be persuaded: doth He threaten us, we slight and contemn it. A hard heart is like a brazen wall—shoot never so many arrows against it, it beats them all back again, they cannot enter: such is a hard heart; neither God's Word nor His works, neither judgments nor mercies, can enter into it to make any impression. See how the Scripture describes and sets forth this hardness of heart (Ezek. xi. 19; Zech. vii. 12; Jer. vi. 28; Isa. xlviii. 4). As they say of the disease of the stone, 'tis oftentimes hereditary; some children have drawn it from their parents, and been born with it: so this stone in the heart, 'tis an original evil; we are born in hardness of heart; 'tis our natural temper. Indeed, for natural and human affections we have flesh and tenderness. Self-love, 'tis quick of feeling, and so parents have their bowels to the fruit of their body; and, in point of humanity to others in misery, all are not hard-hearted; some are tender and pitiful: but in matters of God and spiritual duties, for the entertainments of grace, and the work of conversion, no stone, no adamant, exceeds us in hardness. 2. Look upon them as men living under the law. These men, whom the text speaks of, were not wild men and savages, but civil and orderly: yea, more than so, for their outward state, members of the visible Church, acquainted with the doctrine and discipline of Moses, they had the circumcision of the flesh, instructed in the law; and yet how doth Christ find them? Nothing changed

or altered, not mollified or made tender; but dull, dead-hearted sinners for all that. See the state of the Jews (Jer. ix. 26). Observe, 'tis not in the power of the law to alter or change us, to soften and mollify our hard hearts; that work belongs to Christ and His gospel, to His grace and Spirit. We see this work restrained to the new covenant; 'tis proper to the gospel (Jer. xxxi. 31). The law teaches us, but the gospel enables us; that gives and works in us what the law requires of us (John i. 17). The law hath power of conviction, but 'tis the gospel only hath a power of conversion. The law, that's the hammer that knocks at the door of our hearts; but the gospel, that's the key that opens it, puts back the bar of obduration, and lets in grace and the Spirit into it. 3. These men were very forward in outward devotion, frequenters of the synagogues, great Sabbatarians, and yet under all this seeming sanctity Christ espies a dead, hard, wicked heart lurking. Observe, seeming and outside sanctity may go together, and consist with inward and spiritual hardness and obstinacy. 'Tis the true constitution of a hypocrite; he is all for the outside of religion—there he is excellent; he will outgo and exceed all others in show: but look upon his heart; he wholly neglects it; that's full of hardness and stubborn impiety. (1) 'Tis the easiest work. Outward observances in matter of religion, they cost but little pains; but to work upon the heart, and to bring that in order, that's painful and laborious. As in the practice of physic or chirurgery, 'tis more easy to cure an outward hurt of the body, that is ill-affected or wounded; but an inward distemper, when a vein is broken, and it bleeds inward, the curing of this is a great deal more difficult. (2) 'Tis natural for hypocrisy to leave the heart in hardness, because it employs all its care in dressing and trimming and adorning the outside. As those distempers that send all the heat of the body outward, and cause great flushings in the face, they hinder the inward concoction, cool, and dead the stomach and vital parts, that they cannot perform their functions: so hypocrisy sends out all the heat of their piety to the outside, causes great flushings of piety in the outward man, but chills and cools and deadens the life of religion in the heart.

**II. Their sinful disposition.**—Hardness of heart. 1. The subject of this evil quality is the heart. By heart we are not to understand that particular vital member of the body as in common speech we use to take it, but in the Scripture language: so it signifies the soul and spirit of a man. Thus Gen. vi. 5; Jer. xix. 9; Matt. xv. 19. The whole soul, and all the faculties of it, are perverted and hardened, dead and dull to any goodness, froward and obstinate to any good motion or holy action. As in a distempered clock, wherein both the spring and the wheels are out of frame, it cannot strike one stroke right. (1) The mind and understanding, that's over-grown with hardness and blindness. Eagle-eyed in worldly things, mole-eyed in spiritual. (2) Our memory in matters of religion, how is that dulled and benumbed! how fluid! No retentive power in it for that which is spiritual. Let the seed of the Word be sown in it; yet the devil comes and takes it out, that it can have no abiding in us. (3) The will, of all others, how is that hardened, brawned, steeled! We may as easily remove mountains, pierce the rocks, melt the flint, as persuade and prevail with a hard, obdurate will. (4) Our affections, which are quick and stirring in other matters, how dead and dull are they to spiritual duties! 2. The quality itself is called "hardness." Now there is a threefold hardness of heart. (1) There is, natural and inbred in us, a hardness of heart which we all bring with us into this world, which makes us so unteachable and untractable to any good. (2) There is an acquired and a contracted hardness of heart, which increases that inbred and natural hardness—when custom in sinning begets in us a firm resolution to continue and persist and go on in sinning



(Rom. ii. 5; Heb. iii. 13). (3) There is a hardness inflicted by God, a penal and punishing hardness—when God punishes a wicked man with this spiritual judgment of a hard heart. The inquiry then would be, Wherein doth this hardness of heart consist? how shall we discern it? what are the properties and effects of it? Take these four following: (i) *Durum non cedit*. Those things that are hard, they are unyielding and impenetrable; whereas that which is soft will easily admit of any impression. But a stone, touch it, nay offer more force to it, and strike it, there is yet no yielding in it. And such is the condition of a hard heart, stubborn and impenetrable. Till this hardness be removed by the mighty hand of God, there is no working upon it; it will not give place to any means of grace that God hath appointed, though never so powerful. (ii) A second property and effect of a hard heart is, *Durum non sentit*; that which is hard and brawny is void of sense and apprehension. The tenderest flesh, 'tis of quickest apprehension; but a brawny heart is dull and insensible. Will you see the stupor and lethargy of a hard heart? Such a heart, no suggestions of Satan, though never so dreadful, affrights them—they startle not at them; no inspirations of God's Spirit doth at all affect them—they perceive them not; the checks of conscience never move them; the guilt of sin doth not dare them or perplex them. They are like Solomon's drunkard (Prov. xxiii. 24). (iii) Another property of a hard heart is, *Durum non flectitur*; that which is hard is inflexible. A stone may sooner be broken than bent: and such is the temper of a hard heart, no art or endeavour can bow or bend it. (iv) *Durum repercutit*. There is not only a not yielding in that which is hard, but there is a resistance, a contrary action repelling and driving back any action upon it. Smite a stone, and it will not only not yield, but it enforces the stroke back again. There is a redaction and repercussion in resistance; it will drive back the strength upon him that smote it. And this is the disposition of a hard heart; it will resist and oppose itself against any action of God, and strive against it. And this resistance will show itself in three particulars. (a) In stiffness, and pertinacy, and wilfulness of opinion. (b) In obstinate continuance in wicked courses. (c) In quarrelling and cavilling at any evidence of truth, if it makes against us; it will not suffer us to yield to the obedience of faith, or captivate ourselves to Divine truth, but will exalt itself against the knowledge of God.

**Conclusion.**—1. Is every man's heart by nature thus hard? It gives us the reason why so few men are effectually wrought upon by the means of grace, why so few are converted. 'Tis more wonder to see any to yield and turn to God. 'Tis easier to get oil out of a flint than a good thought out of a stony heart. 2. Is the heart of man so overgrown with hardness? It shows the reason why the work of conversion, even where 'tis begun, goes so slowly forward, why such small progress is made in the work of grace. Engravers upon stone cannot rid much work: they that point and polish diamonds use much grinding to wear away a little unevenness. The heart of man, 'tis like metal, not melted but with much fire and heat; and take it off the fire, it will soon harden of itself. Grace in the heart, 'tis not like heat in the fire, but like heat in the water: as long as there is fire under it, so long it retains heat; but take it off the fire, it will soon grow cold again. 3. Is every man's heart overgrown with this callous obduration? (1) Take heed of increasing it. (i) Be careful to avoid and abstain even from small sins; they may make up this evil of obduration. (ii) Especially be careful not to fall into more gross and notorious sins; they have a special force to harden the heart. Such sins waste the conscience, make havoc of grace, sear the conscience with a hot iron. (iii) Wouldst thou not increase this hardness of heart? Above all take heed of sinning against the light and evidence and dictates of conscience.

(2) Use all good means to remove it, and to get tender and feeling and softened hearts. (i) Complain to God, as to the Great Physician of thy soul, who alone is able to cure this malady. (ii) Then lay thine heart under the dint and stroke of the Word. That Word, enlivened by His Spirit, is a mighty instrument to bruise and soften and mollify the heart (Jer. xxiii. 29). (iii) The daily practice of repentance is of great force to soften our hearts. A mournful heart will prove a mollified heart. There be two names given to repentance, which show the virtue of it to work upon the heart. (a) Compunction, that enters indeed, and goes to the quick. (b) Contrition, that bruises and breaks the hardness of heart, and makes capable of any good impression. A daily dropping upon a hard stone will pierce into it and wear it away: and so the daily distillations of penitential tears are of great force to wear away this spiritual hardness of an obdurate heart.—*Bishop Brownrigg.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1-3. *The hand* was made for work, but there are many withered hands in society. A celebrated German economist divides industrial history into three periods. In the first, nature was chiefly productive; in the second, human toil; in the third, capital. Inventions have changed the hand's labour; there has been a withering of the hand before the onward march of inventive genius. The hand is still required to guide the machine, but there are many who consider toil a disgrace. Fathers once humble in life, but now rich, make the mistake of not training their children in the same industrial habits of life, and in a spirit of self-reliance. Children of the rich scorn toil by reason of their inheritance; while the poor, through envy of the rich, lose consciousness of the inherent dignity of labour. Unto all such Christ says, "Stretch forth thy hand." "Six days shalt thou labour," etc.—*A. C. Ludlow.*

*Lessons.*—1. Christ's detection of human *incompleteness*. He instantly discovered that there was a man in the synagogue with a withered hand. The *musician* instantly detects a false note; the *painter* instantly detects an inartistic line; the *complete* Christ instantly detects the incomplete man. 2. Jesus Christ's power over *partial* disease. The man had only a withered *hand*. In some cases Christ had to heal *thoroughly* diseased men;

in this case the disease was *local*; yet in both instances His power was the same.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Ver. 1. *Power of usefulness destroyed.*—This man's disease was not like the palsy, a type of universal inaction; nor like some consuming fever, a type of the way in which sin and vice pervert all the faculties of the soul; but there was a vivid picture of that infirmity which destroys a man's power of doing anything well. The hand of man is one of those noble physical features which distinguish him from the brute. "The hand" is but another name for human skill, power, and usefulness, and for the studied adaptation of means to ends. 1. The bigotry of these Pharisees rendered them useless in the great kingdom of God, and destroyed their power of serving Christ. 2. Prejudices wither up some of the energies of men. 3. Past inconsistencies often wither up the power of service. 4. Easily besetting sins will paralyse the usefulness of any man who does not earnestly wage war against them.—*H. R. Reynolds.*

*Withered hearts and hands.*—If there were no withered hearts, there would be no withered hands; make the fountain clear, and the stream will be pure. A miser, an unfruitful Christian, a negligent ruler, a strong man who will not help in any good work—these are all mere withered hands.

Ver. 2. *Hollow profession*.—Where religion has become a body of maxims and doctrines, without life or warmth or motion—where it is traditional observance handed down from father to son, “devotion’s every grace, except the heart”—where it is all intellect and no affection, all logic without love—its professors are always strict to “mark iniquities,” and mere trivial breaches of religious etiquette may reap worse punishment than gross sins.—*G. Walker*.

Ver. 5. *Lessons*.—1. It is the duty of a Christian to sorrow not only for his own sins, but also to be grieved for the sins of others. 2. All anger is not to be considered sinful. 3. He does not bear the image of Christ, but rather that of Satan, who can either behold with indifference the wickedness of others, or rejoice in it. 4. Nothing is more wretched than an obdurate heart, since it caused Him who is the source of all true joy to be filled with grief in beholding it. 5. Our indignation against wickedness must be tempered by compassion for the persons of the wicked.—*T. H. Horne*.

*Christ’s look*.—In that look there were two things—there were anger and grief, indignation and inward sorrow. His was not anger which desired evil to its object; no touch of malevolence was in it: it was simply love on fire, love burning with indignation against that which is unlovely. Mingled with this anger there was grief. He was heart-broken because their hearts were so hard. As Manton puts it, “He was softened because of their hardness.” His was not the pitiless flame of wrath which burns in a dry eye; He had tears as well as anger. His thunder-storm brought a shower of pity with it.

*The only legitimate anger* is a holy emotion directed against an unholy thing. Sin, not our neighbour, must be its object; zeal for righteousness, not our pride, must be its distinguishing character.—*Dr. Arnot*.

*Christ’s feelings*.—Everything that

He touched burned that pure nature, which was sensitive to evil like an infant’s hand to hot iron. His sorrow and His anger were the two sides of the medal. His feelings on looking on sin were like a piece of woven stuff with a pattern on either side: on one the fiery threads—the wrath; on the other the silvery tints of sympathetic pity. A warp of wrath, a woof of sorrow, and a dew of flame married and knit together.—*A. Mac-laren, D.D.*

*What was hardening their hearts?*—It was He! Why were their hearts being hardened? Because they were looking at Him, His graciousness, His goodness, and His power, and were steeling themselves against Him, opposing to His grace and tenderness their obstinate determination. Some little gleams of light were coming into their houses, and they clapped the shutters up. Some tones of His voice were coming into their ears, and they stuffed their fingers into them. They half felt that if they let themselves be influenced by Him it was all over, and so they set their teeth and steadied themselves in their antagonism.—*Ibid.*

*Health by obedience*.—The way of health lay in obedience. Had the man said, “No, I cannot”—had he debated, argued, “My arm is withered”—surely the power of Christ had been restrained and the man had gone to his grave a cripple. Christ speaks to us. He tells us to do what seems impossible—to repent, believe, love, pray, trust. If we will be saved, if we will have soul-health, it must come to us in the way of obedience.—*G. Walker*.

*As we work God works*.—If we pass the clear light of day through a prism, we get many coloured rays. Our scientific men tell us that these rays have different properties. Some carry more heat than others; some are full of chemical force, and others have special electric properties. Now if a man should say, “I will glaze my conservatory with different coloured glass; one compartment shall



be red, another green, another blue, and so on; and I will pass my plants from one compartment to another, and play experiments upon them; and I will take the arrangement of light and shade into my own hands,"—you may imagine the result. He would make good scientific experiments, but he would have poor success as a gardener. He would not get flower or fruit in perfection. The "Light of Men" is full-orbed and many-rayed. To the healthy soul His light appears clear as the daylight. I fear we have sometimes too much spectral analysis in our heavenly things. We seek for sharp lines of demarcation. So one man will like the faith-producing ray, another the work-power, another the hope-power, another the will-producing influence. We seem to think, if we could but tinker up and amend the weak parts of our nature we might be saved. These works of mercy, these acted parables, all bring home to the heart one great truth, clear and pure as daylight. They present differences, but, amid all the difference, the one truth. They are full of the entire appeal of Jesus Christ to men. No matter what be our complaint, or special weakness, or sin; if all be diseased, be it ours to take Him in full reliance on His power and willingness to heal.—*Ibid.*

*Instant action.*—All that saved this man was that he did not stop to think. He proceeded as though there were no difficulties, and forthwith for him there were none. All Christ's commands to unconverted men are in the present tense, which means that the command is issued without any allowance of time for comprehending the mysteries of salvation or for acquiring power to become a saved man. It is simply levelled to the range of the instant; not because thought is not advantageous in some circum-

stances, but because it is not in point here. Giving ourselves to Christ is not a matter of *understanding* what we are doing, but a matter of doing something, as when you tell your boy to raise his hand; he does not know how he raises his hand, and you know no more about it than he as regards the physiological intricacies of the act. And if he were to decline raising it until he understood the matter, you would tell him to do it first and understand at his leisure; your command was aimed at his will, and his resort to the intricacies of physiology only a side issue raised to divert your attention from his insubordination. God's commands stand out of all relation to human power to grasp the problems. moral or theological, associated with obedience to those commands. God's commands are like the pole-star, which with swift intuition finds out the magnetic needle as easily by night-light as by daylight, and beats upon it with relentless compulsion equally in the darkness and the sunshine. They are not a question of can, but of will; and with the will once trembling obediently on the verge of action, all needed resource of power is at its instant service.—*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*

Ver. 6. *The working of three determined and most mischievous powers.*—

1. The power of *prejudice*. 2. The power of *technicality*. 3. The power of *ignorance*. *Prejudice* as against Christ: *technicality* as opposed to *humanity*: *ignorance* as forgetful of the fact that in morals as well as in physics the greater includes the less. Sabbath-keeping is less than man-healing.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*The madness of enmity.*—1. It thinks that it can destroy Jesus. 2. It does not see how deeply it condemns itself.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—12.

(PARALLEL: MATT. xii. 15-21.)

*Christ and His disciples.*—While Pharisees and Herodians are hatching their plots against Him in Capernaum or the neighbouring Sepphoris, Jesus withdraws with His disciples to the purer atmosphere on the borders of the Galilean Lake. "It is His first retreat before opposition; and careful readers of the Gospels must observe that whenever the pressure of His enemies became extreme, He turned for safety to the simple fishermen, among whom they had no party, since they had preached no gospel to the poor, and that He was frequently conveyed by water from point to point, easily reached by followers, who sometimes indeed outran Him upon foot, but where treason had to begin its wiles afresh."

**I. The popularity of Jesus.**—1. Though rejected by the leaders both in Church and State, people flock to Him from all quarters: from North ("Tyre and Sidon"), South ("Judea," "Jerusalem," "Idumea"), East ("beyond Jordan"), and West ("Galilee"). "Even the Gentiles were beginning to rejoice in Him. In this following multitude we see a prophecy of the great truth that He should draw all men unto Him. There is that about Jesus which compels attention, and causes men to seek after Him. He is the real magnet of men."

2. The motives of those who followed Him were doubtless very mixed. Many came out of sheer curiosity to witness His miracles; others were attracted by self-interest, hoping that they or their friends would participate in the blessings flowing from Him; but some few, we may hope, were drawn by higher considerations—because His teaching had found an echo in their hearts, and they thirsted for deeper draughts of the water of life.

**II. The adaptability of Jesus.**—He is equally at home everywhere, and never at a loss for expedients to meet exceptional circumstances. It is all one to Him whether He preaches from a ship or in the synagogue, so long as the great work of His ministry is not retarded. It would have been better for the Church in days not long gone by if she had shown more elasticity and adaptability to the needs of the times, if she had striven rather for unity of faith than for uniformity of practice.

**III. Demoniac testimony refused by Jesus.** 1. He would not have men believe on Him on the testimony of evil spirits, but on that of God in Scripture, by His own words and works, and by the Spirit revealing this knowledge from the Father (Matt. xvi. 17; John xiv. 11). 2. The time had not yet come for a full revelation of Himself, even to His most intimate friends. Nothing is more noticeable in our Lord's teaching than that Divine reserve by which the truth is kept in abeyance until men are ready to receive it. "This action of His may teach His followers to be discreet. Falsehood indeed is always evil, but at times reticence is a duty, because certain truths are a medicine too powerful for some stages of spiritual disease. The strong sun which ripens the grain in autumn would burn up the tender germs of spring."

**Lessons.**—1. Christian effort, if rejected by some, will find acceptance from others. 2. No service, however trivial, is disdained by Christ, if the heart be pure. 3. How sad that, while unclean spirits acknowledge the supremacy of Christ, men deny and blaspheme His name.

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 7. *Jesus did not court martyrdom.*—He had one great purpose in view, and He faced His enemies or withdrew from them, according as He could best accomplish His work. He was not afraid to go away, nor afraid to remain if need be. In many cases it is better quietly to withdraw from a hostile crowd, and do one's work elsewhere.—*F. N. Peloubet, D.D.*

Ver. 8. *Crowds are not proofs but means of success.*—The fame of the teaching and the miracles of Jesus brought great multitudes within reach of His influence. He could not go to them all, but they could come to Him. There is a legitimate popularity from earnest words and noble deeds.—*Ibid.*

*How did Christ exercise His influence over great throngs?*—1. He never lowered the moral tone of His teaching. 2. He was never unequal to the increasing demands made upon His power. 3. He never requested the multitude to help Him in any selfish endeavours.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*Power of the gospel.*—1. No subject can draw such great multitudes as the gospel. 2. No subject can so deeply affect great multitudes as the gospel. 3. No subject can so profoundly and lastingly bless great multitudes as the gospel.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 9. *Christ nearer by removal.*—This putting off from the shore and separating Himself from the crowd suggests to us a larger fact in the life of Jesus. He has gone away from the earth now to heaven, but He did so that He might the better save us. We know that in a vast throng only a few could even see Him, much less get at Him to touch Him. So we cannot help thinking how disadvantageous it would be for us had Jesus remained on the earth. How many of the poor, plague-stricken men of earth could have gone to Him, or rather *how few* could have gone to Him! But

now that He is removed from the earth to heaven, He is where we may all see Him by faith, even from the ends of the earth, and "His word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart," and all who hear His words and believe on Him are saved. In fact, just as Jesus was practically nearer to the multitude, both for sight and hearing, in that little boat than on land, so He is nearer to us now than if He had remained on earth—as near to the man in China, in India, or Africa as to us; and "all who call upon Him" are heard and saved.—*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*

Ver. 10. *These miracles*—1. Illustrate and express in visible, tangible forms the lovingkindness of God, His goodwill toward men, His desire for their happiness, and His care to make them free from every evil. 2. The blessed effects of Christ's mission proved it to be Divine. And to-day, as in those days, the convincing proof of Christianity is found in its beneficent effects. It makes everybody better who accepts it. The drunkard becomes sober, the selfish becomes generous, the vile becomes pure. Schools, colleges, education, hospitals, missions, all forms of benevolence, spring up wherever Christ is believed. Wherever there is the most Christianity, there is the most of all the things that raise and bless men. The map of the world is the proof of the Christian religion. 3. They manifest the power and presence of God in nature, and in His daily providence. Wherever any one act shews God's presence, He is wholly present with all His power and all His love.—*F. N. Peloubet, D.D.*

Vers. 11, 12. *The testimony of the demons.*—The publication of Jesus' real character and office by demons' lips was only an act of spite. Their intention was to force on the antagonism between truth and error, between



holiness and sin, and prematurely to bring this Divine history to a tragic close. Therefore Jesus declined this testimony. By the force of *His* mighty will He silenced these evil spirits; and hereby He demonstrates that it is *possible* to crush all hostility—human or Satanic—by the exercise of superior power. But His wisdom

has discovered a more excellent way. The *will* which Divine power has created, Divine power can destroy. Better that Christ should not be made known than that He should be made known by unclean spirits. To be a true servant or preacher of Christ I must be clean.—*J. D. Davies.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13–19.

(PARALLELS: MATT. x. 1-8; LUKE vi. 12-16.)

*Choice and commission of the twelve.*—It is recorded of Israel's first king, while still in the zenith of his royal estate, that when he saw any strong man or any valiant man he took him unto himself, and thus recruited the ranks of the Lord's host (1 Sam. xiv. 52). So here does the true King of Israel and of all men call to Himself twelve choice spirits—the best material to be found in His band of followers—in order that they may be trained under His personal supervision in the true principles of spiritual warfare, and form the nucleus of the heavenly kingdom which He has come to set up on earth. "The appointment of the twelve apostles was in an especial sense an act which marked the inauguration of that kingdom, an act by which our Lord represented the assumption of the powers which belonged to Him as the true Sovereign of the theocracy, for which all the institutions of Judaism were understood by the people of Israel themselves to have been but preparatory." As at other critical times in His ministry, so now, the Pattern Man consecrates Himself to this great work by prayer (Luke v. 12). He also directs the whole body of the disciples to pray the Lord of the Harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest (Matt. ix. 38); and ever since, from the ordination of Matthias to the present time, the Church has sought the special guidance of the Holy Spirit, by prayer and fasting, before proceeding to the laying on of hands.

**I. The choice of the twelve.** The ministry in the apostles derived its origin and commission, not from the Church or from the people, but from Christ. It was in the power of Christ to have called all His people together, and bid them choose their future rulers from amongst themselves; but He did not do so—they were chosen by Christ alone, who Himself designated them, and afterwards breathed upon them when He ordained them with full apostolic power. And when it pleased Christ to raise up two other apostles, it was by the Holy Ghost saying, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"; and the latter expressly disclaims any commission from the people (Gal. i. 1).

**II. The men chosen.** 1. The most noticeable thing is the disproportion between their natural abilities and the work they were set to do. All other great leaders of thought have striven first to secure the adherence of men "whose vigorous character or commanding position would give them a certain influence over the men of their time." It was not so with Christ. "The channels through which His influence was to be conveyed were such as could contribute nought to its fulness; the fibres along which the electric current of His own impulsive energy was to run were to be simply passive in the transmission." Passing by the courtier and the soldier, the noble and the sage,

He selected His first ministers from classes not indeed oppressed by want, but lowly and unsophisticated and of little account in the world's eyes. 2. Yet among the twelve, all drawn from the lower ranks of society, there was evidently great diversity of character. Each was a man of marked individuality. Notes on their personal characteristics will be found in the Outlines and Comments on the Verses.

**III. Their commission.**—1. "That they should be with Him"—observing His demeanour, and His manner of conveying instruction both by word and act; treasuring up in their minds the heavenly principles by which He was ever actuated; drinking in, little by little, some portion of the Divine Spirit which was given to Him without measure. 2. "That He might send them forth to preach"—to proclaim to all, high and low, rich and poor, the glad tidings of salvation through faith in Him. 3. "To have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out demons"—thus carrying on the war begun by Him against the devil and all his works, a war in which "there is no discharge" until the kingdom of darkness is utterly destroyed, and the kingdom of God and of His Christ is universally established in its place.

Ver. 14. *Unrecorded workers and heroes.*—Half of these twelve are never heard of again as doing any work for Christ.

**I. This peculiar and unexpected silence suggests the true worker in the Church's progress—not man, but Christ.**—Men are nothing except as instruments and organs of God. He is all. 1. How this should deliver us from all over-estimate of men, to which our human affections and our feeble faith tempt us so sorely! 2. What confidence it ought to give us as we think of the tasks and fortunes of the Church! One man with Christ to back him is always in the majority.

**II. This silence of Scripture as to so many of the apostles may be taken as suggesting what the real work of these delegated workers was.**—The one thing that *must* be found in an apostle was that he should have been in familiar intercourse with Christ during His earthly life, both before and after His resurrection, in order that he might be able to say, "I knew Him well; I know that He died; I know that He rose again; I saw Him go up to heaven." For such a work there was no need for men of commanding power. Plain, simple, honest men who had the requisite eyewitness were sufficient. The sharpest weapon which any can wield for Christ is the simple adducing of his own personal experience. Christ is the true worker, and all our work is but to proclaim Him, and what He has done and is doing for ourselves and for all men.

**III. We may gather the lesson of how often faithful work is unrecorded and forgotten.**—1. For most of us, our service has to be unnoticed and unknown. The earnestness and the accuracy with which we strike our blow are all important; but it matters nothing how far it echoes. 2. The magnitude of our work in men's eyes is as little important as the noise of it. Were the Peters and the Johns more highly favoured than the others? Was their work greater in His sight? Not so. To Him all service done from the same motive is the same, and His measure of excellence is quantity of love and spiritual force in our deeds, not the width of the area over which they spread. 3. All service done for the same motive in the same force is of the same worth in His eyes. "Small service is true service while it lasts."

**IV. Forgotten work is remembered, and unrecorded names are recorded above.**—1. The forgotten work and workers are remembered by Christ. 2. The forgotten and unrecorded work lives, too, in the great whole. The fruit of our labour may perhaps not be separable from that of others, any more than the sowers can go into the reaped harvest-field and identify the gathered ears which

have sprung from the seed that they sowed, but it is there all the same; and whosoever may be unable to pick out each man's share in the blessed total outcome, the Lord of the Harvest knows, and His accurate proportionment of individual reward to individual service will not mar the companionship in the general gladness, when "he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." 3. The forgotten work will live, too, in the blessed results to the doers. Habits are formed, emotions deepened, principles confirmed, capacities enlarged, by every deed done for Christ, which make an over-measure of reward here, and in their perfect form hereafter are heaven. Nothing done for Him is ever wasted. "Thou shalt find it after many days."—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13, 14. *Christ's call and man's response.*—I. **Christ's call here is—**

1. Addressed to those whom He has already tested. 2. A call to higher service and heavier responsibility. Hitherto they have been learners; henceforth they are to be teachers and healers as well.

II. **Those called responded**—1. Of their own free will. The only constraint Christ ever uses is that of love. 2. Promptly. They answer to their names like soldiers at roll-call—only waiting for orders—ready to do or die. 3. Openly. Secret discipleship, besides being cowardly and mean, thwarts the very object Christ has in view—which is, the transformation of mere followers into apostles, the conversion of the world by the instrumentality of men.

*Apostleship from discipleship.*—Out of the heart of the discipleship came the apostleship. 1. Disciple means learner. The idea rests entirely between two persons, the teacher and the scholar. It involves nothing but the receiving of knowledge by some one docile mind. But apostle means missionary. Its idea is utterance or sending forth. What the disciple has drunk into his own satisfied soul, the apostle is to carry abroad, wherever there are men to hear it. When, then, Jesus turned His disciples into apostles, you see what an event it was. It was really the flowering of that gospel which He had been pouring into them through all their discipleship. The plant fills itself with the richness of the earth. No noise is

made. The whole transaction lies between the plant and the rich earth that feeds it through its open roots. All is silent, private, restricted. But some day the world looks, and, lo! the process has burst open. Upon the long-fed plant is burning a gorgeous flower for the world to see. The earth has sent its richness through the plant to enlighten and to bless the world. The disciple has turned to an apostle. 2. Notice, when Jesus took this great step forward, He did not leave behind His old life with His disciples. He chose out of the number of His disciples twelve, whom also He named apostles. They were to be disciples still. They did not cease to be learners when He made them missionaries. The plant does not cease to feed itself out of the ground when it opens its glorious flowers for the world to see. All the more it needs supply, now that it has fulfilled its life. And so this great epoch in the Christian Church was an addition, not a substitution. 3. It is out of the very heart of the discipleship that the apostleship proceeds. It is the very best, the choicest, as we say, of the disciples that are chosen to be apostles. Always it is the best of the inward life of anything, that which lies the closest to its heart and is the fullest of its spirit, which flowers into the outward impulse which comes to complete its life. It is the most truly thorough learning which by-and-by begins to be dissatisfied with its own learned luxury, and to desire that all men should have the chance of



knowledge. It is the most true refinement that believes in the possible refinement even of the coarsest man. The heart of any good thing is catholic and expansive. It longs to give itself away, and believes in the capacity of all men to receive it.—*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*

Vers. 14, 15. *Christian privilege and power.*—I. **The Christian's privilege**—

1. To preach, filling Christ's place, doing Christ's work, obeying Christ's word. 2. The subject of this preaching. Proclaiming the advent of God's kingdom on earth.

II. **The Christian's power**—1. In the manifestation of Christian sympathy for the afflicted. 2. In the uplifting of earnest prayer and supplication for the souls of men. 3. In the possession and disposal of his substance to compass both these objects, and exhibit by his works his faith.

*The best endowment.*—We need not regret that we have not the power to work miracles: we have something better. We have the living, life-giving Word of God. We have the promise of the Spirit; and by the Word and the Spirit moral miracles are being wrought every day. Preach and pray; plant and water: God will give the increase.

*Sufficient equipment for every emergency.*—At first the apostles had a smaller gospel (they had not got the Cross to preach) and a larger power of miracles; afterwards less miracles, but more gospel; but always a sufficient equipment. You have not to make bricks without straw; Christ gives you "power" for every duty.—*R. Glover.*

Ver. 15. *From temporal to spiritual.*—How is it that the common-sense view of Christian Missions, on the principle of acting first on men's secondary motives by relieving their temporal distresses, and as that principle is sanctioned by the practice of Christ and His apostles, has so much been lost sight of in the foreign operations

of our Church? Of all human qualifications for a missionary's Divine work, I should say that the knowledge of medicine was the most likely, under God's blessing, to prove useful "to the furtherance of that gospel" which is the healing of men's souls (Col. iv. 14; 2 Cor. viii. 18).—*J. Ford.*

Vers. 16-19. *The apostles.*—1. Points in which the apostles were alike.

(1) *Social position*: neither very poor nor very rich. *Wealth, rank, high worldly position*, are not necessary in order to employment and usefulness in the cause of God; and *vice versa*.

(2) *Mental attainments*: neither very learned nor very ignorant. Scholarship, the very highest, may be consecrated to the service of Christ; but is not *indispensable* to Christian usefulness.

(3) *Religious characters*: in the main, sincere, yet defective.

(4) *Business aptitudes*. So far as we know, they were all called from real business life. 2. Points in which they were manifestly *different*. There was no one distinct mental type, and no one special mental characteristic is of exclusive or predominant importance for Christian service. All *ministers* are not of the same order of mind. Some are noted for the predominance of the *imaginative*; some of the *logical*; some of the *metaphysical*; some of the *emotional*; some, we might almost say, of the *intuitional* propensity or power. Souls are saved, instrumentally, by men *as men*, and not by men just as *reasoners, scholars, poets, orators*, etc.—*G. J. Adeney.*

*The apostles* were plain men who had not been perverted by the false philosophies, traditions, and morals of the day. They were mostly working men, business men, practical men, but of great variety of early training, and of business life. Some were poor; some were comparatively well off; some belonged to country villages, some to the city; several were fishermen; one was a publican, one a zealot. They were men of ability; there were great possibilities in them. Christ transformed

common men into apostles, the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem, the leaders of the kingdom that was to transform the world. The charcoal was changed into diamonds. They were far from faultless, but the faults were flaws in a jewel, not the crudeness of the charcoal.—*F. N. Peloubet, D.D.*

*Relationships among the apostles.*—The difficulties connected with tracing the family descent or possible relationship between the apostles are so great that we must forego all hope of arriving at any certain conclusion. But these points seem clear. First, it appears that only the calling of those to the apostolate is related, which in some sense is typical, viz. that of Peter and Andrew, of James and John, of Philip and Bartholomew (Nathanael), and of Matthew the publican. Yet, secondly, there is something which attaches to each of the others. Thomas, called Didymus ("twin"), is closely connected with Matthew. James is expressly named as the son of Alphæus or Clopas. This we know to have been also the name of Matthew-Levi's father. But, as the name was a common one, no inference can be drawn from it, and it does not seem likely that the father of Matthew was also that of James, Judas, and Simon, for these three seem to have been brothers. James is designated by St. Matthew as Lebbæus, from *Lebh*, a heart, and is also named Thaddæus, a term which we would derive from *Thodah*, praise. In that case both Lebbæus and Thaddæus would point to the heartiness and the thanksgiving of the apostle, and hence to his character. St. Luke simply designates him Judas of James, *i.e.* the brother (less probably, son) of James. Thus his real name would have been Judas Lebbæus, and his surname Thaddæus. Closely connected with these two is Simon, surnamed Zelotes or Cananean, both terms indicating his original connection with the Galilean Zealot party. His position in the Apostolic Catalogue, and the testimony of Hegesippus

(Euseb., *H. E.*, iii. 11, iv. 22), seem to point him out as the son of Clopas, and brother of James, and of Judas Lebbæus. These three were, in a sense, cousins of Christ, since, according to Hegesippus, Clopas was the brother of Joseph, while the sons of Zebedee were real cousins, their mother Salome being a sister of the Virgin. Lastly, we have Judas Iscariot, or *Ish Kerieth*, "a man of Kerieth," a town in Judah (Josh. xv. 25). Thus the betrayer alone would be of Judean origin, the others all of Galilean; and this may throw light on not a little in his after-history.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

*Three groups of apostles.*—It can hardly be without significance that in all the apostolic lists they are divided into the same three groups. 1. In the first group we should naturally expect to find the men of the largest and strongest make—those whose capacity and force of character would fit them to lead the rest. And this expectation is justified. Peter and Andrew, James and John, are the natural leaders of the apostolic company. We might almost call them the Boanergic group, so marked and emphatic is the strain of passion in their service. 2. In the second group are the reflective men. Philip is the leader, and he was a man who would rather see than believe. They are excellent and thoughtful men, but they will not do much for the world apart from men of a more forward and adventurous spirit than their own. 3. The third we may call the Hebraistic or practical group. (1) They held stoutly to the old Hebrew forms of truth and righteousness, and were at least as much Hebrew as Christian to the end. (2) They were also men of practical gifts. This is especially seen in Judas—a man chosen to carry the bag because he was careful, prudent, busy, good at buying and selling, conversant with the world.—*T. T. Lynch.*

Ver. 16. *Simon*, son of Jonas (Matt. xvi. 17; John xxi. 15, 16, 17),

was surnamed Peter = a rock, by our Lord (Luke vi. 14; John i. 42; Matt. xvi. 18 f.), was a fisherman by occupation (Matt. iv. 18, 19; Luke v. 3-12; Matt. xvii. 27; John xxi. 3); originally of Bethsaida (John i. 44, xii. 21), afterwards of Capernaum (Mark i. 21, 29); a married man (Mark i. 30; 1 Cor. ix. 5); eager and impetuous, and with feelings easily roused (Luke. v. 8; Matt. xiv. 28, xvi. 16, xxvi. 33; Luke xxii. 61, 62; John xiii. 6, 9, 37, xxi. 7); one of the three with our Lord at the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark v. 37), at the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 1; 2 Pet. i. 16-19), and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 37). He denied our Lord with oaths and curses (Matt. xxvi. 69-75), but was pardoned and restored (Mark. xvi. 7; Luke xxii. 31, 32; John xxi. 15-18); preached on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 14, 38); healed the lame man (Acts iii. 4, 6, 7); spoke before the Sanhedrin (Acts iv. 8, 19, v. 29); reproved Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 3, 4, 8, 9); was followed by multitudes (Acts v. 15, 16); confirmed in Samaria (Acts viii. 14, 17); healed a man long sick (Acts ix. 33, 34); raised a dead woman to life (Acts ix. 40, 41); had a vision, declaring God's will concerning the admission of the Gentiles (Acts x. 9, 17); admitted Cornelius and his company into the Church (Acts x. 46-48); was reproved by St. Paul (Gal. ii. 11-15). His death was foretold by our Lord (John xxi. 18, 19), and he is said to have been crucified at Rome with his head downwards. He is known in Christian Art by the key or keys (Matt. xvi. 19). —*W. F. Shaw.*

*Simon Peter.*—In a Continental picture-gallery there are to be seen, side by side, the first and the last works of a great artist. The first is very crude and faulty; the last is a masterpiece. The contrast shows the result of long culture and practice. So in this verse we have two pictures. "Simon" shows us the rough fisherman of Galilee—ignorant, rash, blundering.

"Peter" shows us the apostle in his Pentecostal strength—the courageous leader, powerful speaker, brave martyr. It is not hard, remarks an American writer, to take roses, lilies, fuchsias, and all the rarest flowers, and with them make forms of exquisite beauty; but to take weeds, dead grasses, dried leaves, trampled and torn, and faded flowers, and make lovely things out of such materials, is the severest test of skill. Yet that is what Christ is always doing. He takes the poorest stuff—despised and worthless, outcast of men oftentimes; and when He has finished His gracious work we behold a saint whiter than snow.

Ver. 17. *James and John*, like Simon, were fishermen (Matt. iv. 21, 22; John xxi. 2, 3), in somewhat better circumstances, possibly, than some of the apostles (Mark i. 20); surnamed Boanerges, or "sons of thunder" (Mark iii. 17), on account of their fiery zeal (Luke ix. 52-55); were with our Blessed Lord at the house of Jairus, on the Mount of Transfiguration, in the Garden; were ambitious (Matt. xx. 20-24), but did drink of Christ's cup of suffering, and were baptised with His baptism of blood, James being a martyr in deed, John a martyr in will, James being the first of the apostles who was put to death for Christ's sake and the gospel's (Acts xii. 2), John dying in extreme old age, the last of all the apostles, after having suffered persecution and exile to Patmos (Rev. i. 9), after having been cast into a cauldron of boiling oil and escaping unhurt, and after having drunk of a poisoned cup and felt no harm (cf. Mark xvi. 18). John lived on at Ephesus unto extreme old age, until men even began to say that he should not die (John xxi. 23), and until he was so feeble that he was obliged to be carried through the streets in a litter, when, as the Christians crowded round him to receive his blessing, his one constant word of exhortation to them was, "Little children, love one another." —*W. F. Shaw.*



Ver. 18. *Andrew*, one of the first two to follow Christ (the other was probably John), has been called "the usher" of the Apostolic College. It seems as if his strong point was a certain tact for bringing people together (John i. 42, vi. 8, xii. 22). Probably he was of an unobtrusive and a practical turn of mind, ready at all times to perform those little offices of kindness and love on which the happiness of life so much depends. He is said to have preached in Scythia and Sarmatia (*i.e.* Poland and Southern Russia), and to have suffered martyrdom by crucifixion at Patræ, in the north of the Peloponnese of Greece.

*Philip* was a sincere but timid seeker of the truth: one of those who can hardly walk alone in the world, and need the support and sympathy of a friend, in good report and evil report. The moment he has been found by Jesus, he goes and confers with a friend, and brings him to judge whether or no He be the Christ (John i. 45, 46). He can hardly dare approach our Lord in behalf of some strangers without getting one of his brethren to go with him (John xii. 22). It is said that he preached the gospel in Asia Minor more particularly, and suffered martyrdom at Hierapolis in Phrygia.

*Bartholomew* is generally supposed to have been the same person as Nathanael, who was a friend of Philip before they both became followers of Christ (John i. 45, 46). St. John always couples Nathanael, as the other Evangelists do Bartholomew, with Philip; and while they never mention Nathanael, he never mentions Bartholomew, but speaks of Nathanael instead. He belonged to Cana of Galilee (John xxi. 2); was highly commended by Christ (John i. 47); and was one of the seven who saw the Lord by the Sea of Tiberias (John xxi. 1, 2). He is said to have preached the gospel in Armenia, converted the Lycaonians, afterwards visited the extreme confines of India, and finally to have been flayed alive by order of Astyages, King of

Armenia; for this reason he is represented in Christian Art with a flaying-knife, and often also as holding the gospel in his hands.

*Obscure Christians.*—Bartholomew was one of the obscure, unknown Christians. Yet these men make up the army of God. It is the aggregate of small things that makes life. It is the stream of pennies that fills the treasury of God. The numberless leaves make the forest; the innumerable sands bound the sea. Not brilliant efforts, but repeated efforts, carry on the world's progress. Thread by thread the cloth is woven; rail by rail the bands of steel encircle the earth; brick by brick the city is built. The one-talented men, like Bartholomew, make the world and the Church. The important people are the privates rather than the generals, the machinists rather than the mechanics, the ploughmen rather than the agriculturists, the pioneers rather than the emigrant agents, the looms men rather than the overseers, the faithful men of mediocrity rather than the brilliant men of genius.

*Matthew.*—The choice of Matthew, the man of business, is chiefly explained by the nature of his Gospel, so explicit, orderly, and methodical, and, until it approaches the Crucifixion, so devoid of fire.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*Thomas* is mentioned four times in the Gospels, apart from the record in the lists of apostles. These notices show us—1. His great love for Christ (John xi. 16). 2. His inquiring spirit (John xiv. 5). 3. That he, like the rest, would not believe in the resurrection of Christ until he had actually seen Him (John xx. 24, 25). 4. That the sight of the Risen Lord not only restored his faith, but brought absolute conviction of Christ's Godhead (John xx. 28).

*James the son of Alphæus* or Clopas (John xix. 25), and Mary the sister of the blessed Virgin Mary, hence called "the brother," *i.e.* cousin of the Lord (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3; Gal. i. 19), called also "the little"

(Mark. xv. 40). We know little of him till after the Resurrection, when our Lord vouchsafed to appear specially to him (1 Cor. xv. 7), doubtless to instruct him in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and to the office of Bishop of Jerusalem, to which he was about to be chosen. For we find him occupying this position (cp. Acts ix. 27, with Gal. i. 18, 19; Acts xii. 17, xv. 13, 19; Gal. ii. 9, 12; Acts xxi. 18), and indeed held in such esteem by the people of Jerusalem that he was called "James the Just." He is the author of the Epistle which bears his name—was martyred by being cast down from the battlement of the Temple, stoned, and finally despatched with a fuller's club, as he was praying for his murderers.—*W. F. Shaw.*

Ver. 19. *Judas.*—In the life of Judas there was a mysterious impersonation of all the tendencies of godless Judaism, and his dreadful personality seems to express the whole movement of the nation which rejected Christ. We see this in the powerful attraction felt toward Messiah before His aims

were understood, in the deadly estrangement and hostility which were kindled by the gentle and self-effacing ways of Jesus, in the treachery of Judas in the garden and the unscrupulous wiliness of the priests accusing Christ before the governor, in the fierce intensity of rage which turned his hands against himself and which destroyed the nation under Titus. Nay, the very sordidness which made a bargain for thirty pieces of silver has ever since been a part of the popular conception of the race. We are apt to think of a gross love of money as inconsistent with intense passion; but in Shylock, the compatriot of Judas, Shakespeare combines the two.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*Judas among the twelve* a sign of—  
 1. The all-endavouring love of Christ.  
 2. The greatness of human depravity.  
 3. The dangers of the spiritual office (or of a mere external connexion with the Lord) without perfect fidelity in the spiritual life (an internal union with Him). 4. The aim and end of the Church—not a community of perfect saints, but of redeemed men.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 20—30.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xii. 22-37; LUKE xi. 14-23.)

*Christ misunderstood and misrepresented.*—The paragraph begins properly with the last clause of ver. 19: "And they went into an house" [see R.V. for variations in reading and rendering]. Robert Stephens, who first divided the Bible into verses, began a verse with these words, as was right; but Beza set the fashion of adding them to ver. 19, which was unfortunately followed by the A.V. translators. They really begin the account of Christ's fourth sojourn in Capernaum, some weeks after His selection of the apostles.

**I. Misunderstood by friends.**—They judged Him, observes Dean Chadwick, as men who profess to have learned the lesson of His life still judge, too often, all whose devotion carries them beyond the boundaries of convention and convenience. There is a curious betrayal of the popular estimate of this world and the world to come, in the honour paid to those who cast away life in battle, or sap it slowly in pursuit of wealth or honour, and the contempt expressed for those who compromise it on behalf of souls, for which Christ died. Whenever by exertion in any unselfish cause health is broken, or fortune impaired, or influential friends estranged, the follower of Christ is called an enthusiast, a fanatic, or a man of unsettled mind. He may take comfort from the thought that his Master was said to be beside Himself—and that, too, by His own

friends—when zeal for God and love for souls kept Him too busy to think of bodily sustenance and rest.

**II. Misrepresented by foes.** The scribes are quick to turn to their own advantage the admission of Christ's friends that He is "beside Himself." Unable to deny the reality, or the miraculous nature, of the cures He wrought (see Matt. xii. 22), they insidiously suggest that while His own reason is dislodged Satan himself is in possession of its throne. As much as to say: "He is an incarnation of the Evil One, and by Satan's own power He expels the subordinate demons." No doubt that was possible. If Satan, at that particular period, was permitted to exercise, through his emissaries, a certain power over men's bodies and minds, it is reasonable to suppose that he might still retain authority over those emissaries, and be able to recall them at any time he chose. The only question is, Would he be likely to do so? Would such a policy serve his purpose? To the elucidation of this problem Christ addresses Himself.

**III. The scribes triumphantly confuted.**—Whether the powers of darkness, presided over by Satan, be compared to a "kingdom," from the wide extent of their influence, and the completeness of their organisation; or to a "house," from the closeness of their intimacy, and the identity of their interests,—in either case division is fatal to them—subversive of their design, and destructive of their power. The kingdom is brought to desolation, the house falls to pieces, by the mutual jealousies and aggressions of their component members. Such would be the effect of Satan casting out Satan—of the chief of the devils co-operating with one who went about dispossessing and healing his victims. The conclusion was inevitable: that not Beelzebub, but God, was with Him who did these things; that the kingdom of Satan was being brought to nought, not by internal dissensions, but by external force—by the supervening of a stronger influence and more powerful Monarch.

**IV. The true state of the case explained.** Still speaking under the veil of parable or allegory, Christ now draws a picture of a strong man living in the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. The illustration reminds us of the turbulent times of our own country a few centuries ago, when the knights and barons with their retainers, each in his stronghold, maintained an armed neutrality against all comers. But peace which is merely preserved by strength is liable at any moment to be disturbed and overthrown by greater strength. So here: the strong man is bound, his house invaded and plundered. In attempting to expound the inner meaning of this, it may be well to include the further details added in Luke xi. 21, 22. 1. The "strong man armed" is Beelzebub or Satan: strong by natural endowments, a powerful spirit, who had already even dared to defy the Most High; strong also in "his armour wherein he trusted," to enable him still to wage war, and after each defeat to reappear, if possible, stronger than before. 2. By "his armour" we may understand his agents, other wicked spirits, who, like himself, kept not their first estate; but, not being so strong and ambitious as he, naturally fell into a sort of dependence on him. 3. With the aid of these his active instruments Satan is enabled to "keep his palace," *i.e.* to maintain his dominion over the souls and bodies of those unhappy men who have once been "taken captive by him at his will." Every sinner may truly be said to be "possessed with a demon," and sometimes with more than one, as Mary Magdalene (Luke viii. 2) and the Gadarene (Mark viii. 30). So some are possessed by many sins, "serving divers lusts and passions"—divers, as directed towards different objects, but all having a common source and parentage—all "of their father the devil," and ever ready to "do the lusts of their father," as well as to co-operate with and inflame each other. 4. And who is he who proves himself



stronger than this strong man, able to bind him and spoil his house? Not one of the same kind, another passion, a stronger devil; but an antagonist in nature and principle, as well as in act. Such was He who spoke these words. His great mission was to "destroy the works of the devil"; and His nature was Divine (see Isa. xlix. 24, 25, lxiii. 5). Throughout His ministry Christ invariably acted as a Victor in His dealings with the demons: commanding them with authority; rebuking them; not suffering them to speak; permitting them, as an indulgence, to enter into the lower animals, and wreak their impotent spite on those who had no souls to be destroyed or saved. He also enabled His servants to do the same (Mark iii. 15; Luke x. 17). And ever since, though Satan is still permitted to "go about seeking whom he may devour," he has been restrained from exercising his power in the way of bodily possession; and with respect to the influence which he may still exert over the spiritual part of us, he finds that he has to deal with One stronger than himself even with Him who, having grappled with and overcome him once for all upon the Cross, is ever ready to renew on behalf of every individual soul the battle that He then fought for the whole human race. By virtue of that victory we are now His "goods," His lawful "spoil," His purchased possession; and so long as we fight under His banner we are secure. Satan cannot lay a finger on the man who is alive to the responsibilities of his Christian calling, who is diligent in the use of the means of grace, who lives in the atmosphere of prayer, who "takes unto him the whole armour of God," "and fights the good fight of faith."

V. **The scribes solemnly warned.**—Christ has submitted His claim, in an argument full of sweet reasonableness and touching forbearance, to the better judgment of His foes; but now He declares, with solemn emphasis, as being in possession of the secrets of the Almighty, the principles upon which the world of spirits is administered. He asserts that sin has its scale, its climax. There are sins of instinct, and of passion, and of ignorance. Where there is little light to be guided by, there is little light to sin against. The next step is where there is deliberation before the sin is committed. The last and worse stage is where not only the deliberate judgment is gone against, but the attempt is made to deny the principle of judgment in the soul itself. The hands of the watch move backwards; the lamp flags with the very abundance of oil; the man's soul dies. Over against the words, "Repent! Be ye forgiven!" stand these—"Irreclaimable! Unforgivable!" These scribes had now wrought themselves up to such a pitch of hatred against Jesus, that they were standing, as it were, on the very brink of the precipice; and in the extremity of His love the Saviour utters this tremendous warning, to keep them from taking the fatal plunge. [In the Homilies that follow, this difficult subject is discussed from various points of view.]

*The sin against the Holy Ghost.*—I. **The dignity of the person of the Holy Ghost.**—This is implied in the assertion, that whoso speaketh against the Son of Man may be forgiven, while he that speaketh against the Holy Ghost cannot. The power of Deity was inherent in the Incarnate Saviour; and He told the Jews expressly that it was by the Spirit of God that He cast out devils. Had He been a created Intelligence, would our Saviour have spoken as He does in the text? Had the Holy Spirit been inferior, in essential dignity, to the Father and the Son, would He have been joined with them in one name in the sacred form of Christian baptism? And would the new creation, the spiritual resurrection in the sinner's soul, have been ascribed to His sacred agency?

II. **The nature and design of the Spirit's influence.**—The Pharisees had sufficient light to remove their errors; and they had conviction enough to lead

to a change of heart; but unhappily they resisted both light and conviction: pride and sensuality combined to close their eyes, and led them to spurn the offered grace of the Holy Ghost. Their dreadful sin lay in the act of not being convinced, when a heavenly influence was offered them, and in the blasphemy of attributing the works of Christ to diabolical agency.

**III. The precise nature, and the accompanying evidences of the sin against the Holy Ghost.** Some have imagined that the *words* of blasphemy to which our Saviour refers constitute the essence of the unpardonable sin. But words, considered abstractedly, possess no moral quality whatsoever: it is only as symbols or indices of the mind that our expressions are criminal or otherwise. Again - It has been supposed that the sin against the Holy Ghost was confined to the period of our Saviour's miracles; and that when the direct evidence arising from these was withdrawn, this sin could no longer be committed. The reverse, however, of this would rather appear to be the case: for our Lord does not tell the Pharisees that they were *already* involved in the guilt and doom attaching to the commission of the unpardonable sin: He rather cautions them to beware of plunging themselves into so dreadful a situation. In order, then, to guide us in endeavouring to ascertain in what cases the sin against the Holy Ghost may have been committed, we may lay down the two following positions: first, that the sin itself is a wilful resistance offered to the Spirit's invitations and influence; and, secondly, that its tendency is to shut up the soul in judicial hardness and final impenitence. Both these positions are recognised in Heb. vi. 4-6, a memorable passage, bearing, I apprehend, upon the subject. 1. The Spirit offers to draw men, but they will not follow Him: He repeats His friendly solicitations again and again; but sensual passions or earthly affections absorb the accents of His monitory voice, until at length it dies away and is heard no more! It is not, I apprehend, because a man is too slothful, or too negligent, or even, in a certain sense, too earthly-minded, that he is in danger of fatally sinning against the Holy Ghost. It is because he hates the renovating power of that Divine Agent. It is because he rebels against the reign of grace and holiness in the heart. It is because he cannot endure the unrivalled supremacy of a spiritual principle bearing down the carnal propensities of the soul, and bringing into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ. 2. I now go on to remark on that judicial hardness and final impenitence, the latter of which *invariably*, and the former with *few if any exceptions*, follows the commission of it. There is only one way in which a sinner can effectually close the avenues of reconciliation against himself, and secure his place beforehand in the regions of eternal woe: that way is by putting himself out of the reach of repentance—by resisting the motions of the Spirit, till they are finally withdrawn—by tampering with conscience, till her energies are paralysed, and he sinks, under a load of unpardoned guilt, into a profound lethargy.

**Conclusion.** 1. *Every sin is fatal in its tendency.* If you are grasping the wages of unrighteousness—if you are the slaves of lust or intemperance—if the world, with its winning allurements, is enthroned in your hearts—or, in short, if you are neglecting the great salvation of Christ,—you are in danger of perishing everlastingly. Let your self-examination, then, be general, and not confined to one point. 2. *This subject is replete with salutary caution.* Many judicious persons have supposed that a degree of obscurity is permitted to hang around it, in order to put Christians upon their guard, and to lead them to beware of everything which might appear, in the slightest degree, to savour of the unpardonable sin. 3. Lastly, I speak to you *in the language of encouragement.* The darkest clouds are sometimes tinged with a bright and beautiful radiance. The contemplation of a sin which is pronounced to be unpardonable is certainly solemn, peculiarly solemn; but still, when taken in its proper

connexions, it needs to alarm none but the wilful and determined transgressor. On the contrary, the subject forms an occasion of exhibiting, in the strongest light, the rich and abounding mercy of God. It shows us an Almighty Sovereign holding out a sceptre of peace, till the revolting rebel will no longer deign even to cast a look upon it. It discloses to us a Parent pleading with His undutiful children, till His voice dies away in the distance of their determined and fatal wanderings. What inexpressible consolation, then, the subject, rightly understood, affords to every anxious inquirer after mercy!—*Wm. Knight.*

*Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.*—I. **What the sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost means, and wherein precisely it consists.**—I said sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, because some call it the sin against the Holy Ghost, though Scripture itself never calls it anything else but blasphemy, which is worth the observing. It lies in words, is committed by speaking, and particularly by evil-speaking, by reviling and defaming the Holy Spirit of God. There may be, and there have been, several offences committed against the Holy Ghost which yet do not amount to the blasphemy against Him specified in the text. There is such a thing as grieving the Holy Spirit, and quenching the Spirit, when men refuse to hearken to His counsels, to follow His motions, or to obey His calls. But this is not blaspheming Him. There is also what St. Stephen calls resisting the Holy Ghost, which is opposing Him with a high hand and rebelling against Him, and is a very heinous sin; and yet neither is that the same with blaspheming and slandering Him, which is what those Pharisees were guilty of. Ananias and Sapphira grievously affronted the Holy Ghost in telling Him a lie, either presuming upon His ignorance as not knowing it, or upon His patience as if He should have connived at it. But yet that was not so bad as what the Pharisees did in ascribing His works to the devil. The malicious telling a lie of Him, to defame and slander Him, was a more heinous offence than the telling a lie to Him under a weak and foolish persuasion. There is also another way of affronting the Holy Ghost, by vilifying His operations, which yet comes not up to the sin of the text. Upon the day of Pentecost, when the disciples, full of the Holy Ghost, began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance, there were some standing by who mocking said, "These men are full of new wine," vilifying the operations of the Spirit as the effects of drunkenness. But the men who said it, said it perhaps wantonly or ignorantly, rather than spitefully or maliciously. But the Pharisees who are charged with being guilty of blaspheming the Holy Ghost, they very well knew that what they had seen done could not be accounted for in a natural way; and yet such was their spleen and rage against the gospel, that they chose rather to impute the miracles of our Lord to the devil than to acknowledge the Divine hand, which was so visible in them that they themselves could not but see it, had they been at all disposed to it. I may here also mention Simon Magus as a person who very highly affronted the Holy Ghost, when he offered money for the purchasing His miraculous gifts. But neither was that any such direct blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as what the text mentions; for he had some respect and veneration for the miracles he saw wrought and for the author of them, and was very far from imputing them to the assistance of the devil. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was something worse still than anything I have yet mentioned: it was defaming the Holy Spirit of God, and God Himself, under the execrable name of Beelzebub; it was reviling, and that knowingly and desperately, the Divine works as diabolical operations.

II. **The heinousness of that sin.**—It was a most wicked and impudent lie and slander upon the Holy Spirit, and was flying, as it were, in the face of



God. One would think, when God Himself interposes, giving the Divine signal in plain uncontested miracles, that it might become all men to be mute, and to lay aside their otherwise unconquerable rancour and prejudice. But the Pharisees were so resolute and so outrageous in reviling everything that gave any countenance to Christ and His gospel, that they would not spare even God Himself, but called Him Beelzebub, spitefully defaming His most Divine works as being nothing else but diabolical impostures. They saw the miracles of our Blessed Lord, and were very sensible that they were real and true miracles: they knew also that they were wrought in direct opposition to the devil and his kingdom, having all the fair appearances possible of being Divine: nor would they have scrupled to have received them as Divine, had they been wrought by any one else excepting Christ or His disciples. But such was their envenomed hatred and inveteracy against Him and His, that, at all adventures, contrary to all candour or equity, and in contradiction to reason and common sense, they resolved to say, however scarce to believe (for they hardly could be so stupid), that He was in league with the devil, and that all His mighty works which He wrought in the name of God were the works only of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. There could not be a more insolent slander, or a more provoking outrage against the Divine Majesty, than this. It was sacrificing the honour of Almighty God, and both the present and future happiness of men, to their own private humours and party passions; being resolved to take up with any wretched cavil, any improbable and self-contradictory lies and slanders against God, rather than permit the honest and well-meaning people to believe in Christ Jesus upon the brightest evidence of His miracles.

III. **Whether any sins committed at this day are the same thing with it, or which of them come the nearest to it.** 1. For the sake of the over-tender and scrupulous consciences, I would observe, that roving, and which some call blasphemous thoughts, which rise up accidentally, and as accidentally go off again, are nothing akin to the sin which I have been speaking of, which consisted in premeditated lies and slanders against God, formed with design to obstruct or darken the evidences of the true religion, and to prevent others from looking into them or being convinced by them. 2. Even the atheists or infidels of these times can scarce come up to the same degree of guilt with the Pharisees of old, because they have not seen the miracles of Christ with their own eyes. Rational and historical evidence may be as convincing as the other, when duly considered; but as it strikes not upon the senses, it does not awaken the attention, and alarm every passion of the soul, in such a degree as the other does. For which reason the unbelievers of our times, though abandoned and profligate men, are not altogether so blamable in the opposition they make to Christianity as the unbelievers of old time were. Nevertheless, it must be said, that the obstinate rejecting the miracles of our Lord and of His disciples (which have been so fully attested), and much more the ridiculing and bantering them, and the endeavouring to run them down by lies and slander, is a very high and heinous crime, as well as horrid blasphemy; especially if committed in a Christian country, and in a knowing age, and where men have all desirable opportunities of learning the truth, as well as the strongest motives offered for submitting to it.—*Archdeacon Waterland.*

*Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.* 1. The blasphemy of speaking against the Holy Ghost appears to have been the sin which those scribes and Pharisees committed; for St. Mark expressly tells us that our Lord pronounced these words, “because they said, He hath an unclean spirit”; and He Himself declared (Matt. xii. 28) that He had “cast out the devil by the Spirit of God,” *i.e.* by the Holy Ghost; so that if He exercised the power of the Holy Ghost in this

miracle which He wrought on the blind and dumb man, the scribes and the Pharisees, who spake against this miracle, by ascribing it to an unclean spirit, or to the prince of the devils, did most certainly blaspheme or speak against the Holy Ghost. 1. It was a wilful and presumptuous sin; for though those scribes and Pharisees had not seen the miracle wrought by our Blessed Lord, yet they allowed and acknowledged it to have been wrought by Him, and not withstanding this they perversely ascribed it to the power of Beelzebub. 2. It was committed against God Himself, whether we consider the Holy Ghost as one person in the Divine Trinity, or even if we consider the Spirit of God as that whereby God the Father acted in such wonderful operations (Matt. xii. 28). 3. It consisted in despising the word of God, and rejecting His gracious message of peace and pardon to mankind: for this miracle was performed, and wrought in evidence of our Blessed Lord's Divine mission, in proof that the doctrine which He taught was from God, and that He Himself was the Messias who was to appear amongst the Jews, and was to make an atonement for the sins of all such as believed in Him, and qualified themselves for pardon by faith and repentance.

II. *Why, and in what sense, this sin hath never forgiveness.*—1. For the explaining of this aright let it be considered that our Saviour spake this to Jews, and therefore probably suited His expressions to their law, and to the opinions then prevailing among them. And we find that the law of Moses appointed sacrifices for legal defilements, and for sins of ignorance against God, and appointed sacrifices in some cases and penalties in others for wilful sins against men (Lev. iv., v., and vi.); but for the greater sins against God, such as wilful and presumptuous ones, the sentence of death was pronounced by God against all offenders of this sort, and there was no sacrifice or other means by which the punishment incurred might be taken off or suspended (Num. xv. 30, 31, 35; Lev. xx. 10). And this is the very thing which St. Paul means when he says to the Jews, that by Christ all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Where he plainly asserts that under the Jewish law there were crimes which could not be atoned for and forgiven; and if not under the Jewish law, then not under natural religion, because the Jewish law had that and all its advantages included in it. As to the first sort of sins taken notice of by Moses in his body of laws, viz. those of ignorance committed against God, and those of wilfulness against men, when the sacrifices appointed in such cases are commanded to be offered by an offender, the usual phrase is, "The priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him." So that such sins might well be called pardonable ones, there being a method prescribed for the atonement of them. But as to the other sort, that of wilful and presumptuous sins against God, by which His word was despised, such sins were properly unpardonable ones, because the Jewish laws had provided no sacrifice by way of atonement for them. And that the unpardonableness of this heinous sort of sins against God depends upon their having no sacrifice appointed for them appears from Heb. x. 28. Now, to bring these observations home to the case before us, the blaspheming or speaking against the Son of Man, or against the Holy Jesus, in His personal capacity, and as man only, might be forgiven to these scribes and Pharisees, because by the Jewish law a provision was made for its expiation. But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of God, when it was a presumptuous sin, as this of the scribes and Pharisees was, had no pardon under the Jewish law. God was reproached, and His word was despised, and therefore the soul that thus offended was to be cut off from among His people. Nor was there any pardon provided for it under the gospel dispensation, because, when they thus blasphemed the Holy Spirit of God, by

which Christ wrought His miracles, the only means which could redeem the adversaries of the truth from the Divine vengeance was the merit of Christ's death applied to them by faith; and that benefit they wholly excluded themselves from in the very act of their sinning, which consisted in their rejecting the evidence which the Spirit of God gave of Christ being the Messiah and Saviour of mankind. This was, as things then stood with them, an unpardonable sin, either in this age, the age of the Jewish law, or in the age to come, that is, the age of the gospel. But were the gates of mercy for ever shut against these blasphemers of the Holy Ghost? Was the sentence here passed upon them unalterable and irreversible in all cases? No, surely: for, as Athanasius observes, "Our Blessed Lord does not say that it shall not be forgiven to him that blasphemeth and repenteth, but only to him that blasphemeth; and therefore He must have meant this of one that continued in a state of impenitence; for with God no sin is unpardonable." If such blasphemers could repent of that their heinous sin, no doubt but they might be forgiven it under the Christian covenant: and who can say of any man that all means of repentance are cut off from him? Our Lord said in as strong words as these are, "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father"; and yet but a little while afterwards, when Peter denied Him before men three times, and in the most obstinate manner, Christ was so far from rejecting him, that upon his weeping bitterly and repenting he was continued even in his apostleship, and was ever after one of the leaders in that blessed work of propagating the Christian faith. And it is highly probable that some of the three thousand whom St. Peter at his first preaching converted to the Christian faith had thus blasphemed the Holy Ghost in our Saviour's days; for he describes them as those who "knew the miracles and signs" which God wrought by His Son, and notwithstanding this "with wicked hands had crucified Him." And yet he calls upon them to "repent and be baptised for the remission of their sins," and even encourages them to hope that upon so doing they "should receive that Holy Ghost" whom they had so often blasphemed in our Saviour's miracles. We are certain, likewise, that among those who reviled Christ while He was hanging upon the Cross there were scribes who said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save"; thereby acknowledging that He had wrought miracles in healing diseases, this perhaps before us in particular, and yet denying that He could "save Himself," and consequently denying that what He wrought was by a Divine power. And yet we find that our Saviour prayed even for these scribes, saying, "Father, forgive them." And surely that sin of theirs was not unpardonable upon their repentance, when Christ with His dying breath prayed for their forgiveness. — *Bishop Zachary Pearce.*

*The sin against the Holy Ghost.* — I shall never forget the chill that struck into my childish heart so often as I heard of this mysterious sin which carried men, and for aught I knew might have carried even me, beyond all reach of pardon; or the wonder and perplexity with which I used to ask myself why, if this sin were possible — if, as the words of our Lord seem to imply, it was probable even and by no means infrequent — it was not clearly defined, so that we might at least know, and know beyond all doubt, whether it had been committed or had not.

**I. The two phrases** "this [present] age" and "the coming age," which our Lord here adopts, were perfectly familiar to the Jews, and had a clear and definite meaning on their lips. "This present age," or "the age that now is," was the age in which they lived, with all its apparatus of religious teaching and worship, the age of the Law and the Temple; while "the coming age," or "the age to come," was that happier time of which the advent of the long-



promised Messiah was to be the sign and the commencement, although it could not fully come until Jesus the Christ ascended into heaven and poured out His Spirit from on high. So that what He really affirmed was, that there is a sin which is just as unpardonable under the Christian dispensation as it was under the Mosaic dispensation.

II. But what is this sin for which, at least in the present world, there is no forgiveness, or no provision for forgiveness? It is that wilful and invincible ignorance which refuses to be taught, that love of darkness which refuses to admit the light even when the sun is shining in the sky. They saw the light, and knew that it was light; and yet they loved darkness more than light, because their deeds were evil. Like the servants in the parable, they said, "This is the Heir," only to add, "Let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours"—ours, and not His. Jesus "knowing their thoughts," knowing too the desperate moral condition from which their thoughts sprang, simply warned them that it *was* desperate. They were deliberately sinning against light, against conscience, against all that was true and right and good; in a word, they were "speaking against the Holy Ghost," the Spirit of all truth and goodness; and so long as they did that there was no hope for them.

III. So far, then, from giving us a dark mystical saying in which our thoughts are lost, **our Lord simply states a moral truism**, as we might have inferred from the casual and unemphatic manner of His speech. And the truism is that, since salvation is necessarily of the *will*, if men *will* not be saved, they cannot be saved; if they will not yield to the Divine Spirit when it moves and stirs within them, they cannot be redeemed and renewed by that gracious Spirit. Under whatever dispensation they live, they are self-excluded from the kingdom of heaven, by the one sin which is therefore called an "eternal" or "æonial" sin.

IV. **That this unpardonable sin might be pardoned**, that it was the sin, and not the men who committed it, which could never be forgiven, is clear: for many of the Pharisees who had long resisted the Spirit of God in Christ—and be it remembered that even Saul of Tarsus had long "kicked against the goads" which urged him toward the kingdom—afterwards repented of their sin, received His words, believed His works, and were welcomed into the fellowship of the Church. And even of those who never knew an earthly repentance, and of their doom in "the world to come," this passage says absolutely nothing. It leaves us to our own conjectures, our own hopes; and neither approves nor condemns those who trust that in the world to come even those who leave this world impenitent may be taught "even against their will, and by means of a larger experience, the lessons they would not learn here; and so be brought to confess their guilt and folly, and be taken at last—so as by fire—into the arms" of the Divine Compassion and Love.

V. **But where lies our danger** of committing this sin against the Holy Ghost, our need therefore of the warning that, so long as we persist in this sin, pardon and salvation are impossible to us? We fall into this sin, must be my reply, whenever we consciously and wilfully resist the Spirit of truth and goodness—whenever, *i.e.*, we see a truth and do not accept it, because it cuts our prejudices against the grain—whenever we know what is good, and yet do it not, because we love some evil way too well to leave it. To speak against any form of truth or any form of goodness which we inwardly recognise as good and true, or even suspect to be true and good, is "to speak against the Holy Ghost": and, be it remembered, "deeds speak louder than words." In our religious life we sin against the Holy Ghost if, as we read the gospel, we learn that in Christ Jesus we have precisely such a Saviour from all sin and uncleanness as we need—if, as we read, I say, conscience leaps up in approval of what we read and urges us to accept the offered salvation, and we refuse to listen because we are too

engrossed with the outward affairs of life, or too attached to some of the forms of sin from which Christ would save us to part with them yet, we commit the sin which cannot be pardoned, and from which we cannot be saved so long as we cleave to it. Or, again, if after we have accepted, or professed to accept, His salvation, we catch glimpses of new and higher truths, and shut our eyes against them because we do not want to be at the trouble of revising and recasting our theological formulas—or if we are inwardly called to new and difficult duties, and turn away from them because they would impose a strain upon us or a sacrifice which we are not willing to bear, —in thus sinning against conscience we sin against the Holy Ghost. Nor is there any one respect in which we refuse to recognise truth as true or duty as binding upon us, whether in the formation of our political views or the discharge of our political functions, or in the principles on which we conduct our business, or even in the spirit in which we conduct our literary or scientific investigations, in which we do not or may not fall into this very sin. For the Holy Spirit is the Spirit from whom all true thoughts and all forms of goodness do proceed. To close our eyes to any truth, to neglect any duty, is not only to shut that truth out of our minds, and not only to lower and impoverish the tone of our life; it is also to grieve and resist that pure and gracious Spirit by whom we are made one with the Father and the Son; it is to impair the very organ by which truth comes to us, and to cripple the very faculty by which we are enabled for all dutiful and noble enterprise.

VI. There is still, however, one difficulty which must be met, and which I meet the more cheerfully because it will give an opportunity of noticing what is peculiar in St. Mark's report of this great saying, viz. the phrase, "*Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of eternal sin.*" The difficulty I am told is this: "When we read of a sin that cannot be forgiven whether in the Mosaic age or the Christian, we naturally assume our Lord to mean that it cannot be forgiven *even when it is repented of*; for *no* sin can be forgiven men until they repent; and our Lord is here drawing a distinction between one sin and all others. What, then, can this distinction be but this: that, though all other sins may be forgiven when men repent of them, this sin *cannot* be forgiven, let them repent of it how they may?" But we may ask those who urge this objection: How do you know that there are no sins which God will not forgive men *even before* they repent, and even though they should never repent, at least in this present life? We may suggest that our Lord is here drawing a distinction between outward overt transgressions which may be forgiven us on, or even perhaps apart from, repentance, and the inward sinful principle which can never be *forgiven*, but must be renounced and cast out. What is the sin which our Lord Himself compares, or contrasts, with the unpardonable sin? It is the sin of speaking against Himself, the gracious Son of Man. It is to deny that there was any manifestation of God in the God manifest in the flesh; in more modern phraseology, it is to deny that there is anything Divine in the Christian dispensation and faith. That, alas! is a sin only too common in our own days. There are intelligent and learned men only too many, and men whom, judged by any other standard, we should all pronounce to be honest and good men, who deny that God has ever given any immediate revelation of His will to mankind, who even doubt both whether any such revelation be possible and whether there be any God to make it. They may have been blinded by intellectual prepossessions or an inherited bent of mind: but are we to blame blind men because they do not see, and to accuse them of a wilful rejection of the light that shines from heaven? And if we do not, will God? The fault may be *ours*, rather than theirs. We may have turned the very light into a darkness. We may so have misrepresented our Master to

them, that, instead of seeing Him as He is, they may have seen only that imperfect and misleading image of Him which we have made in our own likeness. If a man has honestly doubted, if he has followed the inward light and been true to the inward voice, and he should die before discovering that Christ is other and better than he knew, that He is indeed the true light of every man and the very brightness of the Father's glory—if, that is, he should never repent in this world of his sin in speaking against and rejecting the Son of Man,—will *his* sin never be forgiven him, or will it not, rather, never be counted against him, however heavily he may reckon it against himself? On the other hand, if a man has *not* been honest in his doubts and denials—if, besides sinning against the God without him who sought to reveal Himself to him, he has also sinned against the God within him; if when reason or conscience said, That is true and you ought to believe it, or, That is duty and you ought to do it, he has refused to accept the truth, or do the duty which he felt to be clothed with Divine sanctions; if he has consciously shut out the light and refused to walk in it; if, in the language of our passage, he has added the sin against the Holy Ghost to the sin against the Son of Man, and if he should leave the world without repenting of his sin,—how can we deny that he has put himself outside the pale of forgiveness by making forgiveness impossible? What may become of him in that other, future, world we cannot say, we are not told, though we are still allowed to cherish the hope that new moral forces may be brought to bear upon him and may take effect upon him; all we can be sure of is that so long as he deliberately shuts out the light, the light cannot reach him—that so long as he refuses to part with his sin, he cannot be saved from his sin.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 20. *The strain of constant publicity.*—In the crowd there is no moderation. They can go to a pitch of enthusiasm in one direction, or of animosity in another; but in the presence of Christ they cannot act with calmness. Nothing is so wearing as the excitement of constant publicity. Unless quiet alternate with the excitement of great gatherings, the body wastes, the nerve frets, the mind is jaded, and the soul itself goes stale and flat. Popularity has, accordingly, often a cruel kindness, which claims untimely and exhausting service from him whom it flatters with its approbation.—*R. Glover.*

Ver. 21. *The taunts of unbelievers.*—It is very hard for the Christian to bear the taunts of unbelievers. It is difficult to work bravely on, without the sympathy of one's fellows; it requires great grace not utterly to lose heart, to bear being called a

fanatic, to be sneered at and scorned. To human nature such treatment gives keenest pain; yet God's grace is sufficient to triumph in us. When we are sorely tried, let us not think of the discouragements, but of Jesus, who bore a shame and obloquy for us far deeper than we can ever bear for Him.

*Opposition from friends* is very common in the career of reformers and of those who depart from the ordinary course. History is full of instances. It is very frequent, too, in the case of those who, in irreligious families or societies, seek to become Christians. (See Matt. x. 24, 35-37.) Here is a severe test. But the only way in which this world can be improved and saved is by that faith, and character, and truth which will do right, no matter who opposes. They who when "at Rome do as the Romans do" in matters of conscience, will never change Rome into the city of God.



*Friendship's shortcomings.*—1. Unable to follow the highest moods of the soul. 2. Unable to see the spiritual meaning of outward circumstances. 3. Seeking to interfere with spiritual usefulness. 4. Seeking to reduce life to commonplace order. The sincere servant of Jesus Christ will take his law from the Master and not from public opinion.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*The zealous spirit.*—A zealous spirit is essential to eminent success in anything. Perhaps there is the more need to insist upon this because enthusiasm is out of fashion. It is bad form nowadays to admire anything very warmly. To be strenuously in earnest is almost vulgar. Especially is this so in regard to religion. "Our Joe is a very good young man," said an old nurse the other day; "but he do go so mad on religion." That was the fly in the ointment—which spoilt all. Did not Pope say long ago, "The worst of madness is a saint run mad"? And he only put in terse and pithy speech what other people say more clumsily. 1. And yet how can one be a Christian without being an enthusiast? Indifferent, half-hearted Christians are not true Christians at all. The author of *Ecce Homo* cannot be said to exaggerate in his declaration that "Christianity is an enthusiasm, or it is nothing." 2. And what good work has ever been wrought without enthusiasm? Said a great preacher: "If you want to drive a pointed piece of iron through a thick board, the surest way is to *heat your skewer*. It is always easier to burn our way than to bore it." Only "a soul all flame" is likely to accomplish much in the teeth of the difficulties which beset every lofty enterprise.—*G. H. James.*

Ver. 22. *Zeal in opposing Christ.*—These scribes came all the way from Jerusalem to oppose Christ. Had there been as much earnestness in propagating the truth as there has been in trying to check it, the whole world might by this time have been regenerated.

*Satan versus Satan.*—Would God that we might hear of strife and contentions in the ranks of the kingdom of darkness! If the public-house keepers might rise up against the gamblers; if thieves and swindlers might but take each other by the throat; if the managers of the horse-races might but begin to make war upon the organisers of the lottery schemes; if drunkards and seducers would but fall out; if only Satan might fight against Satan, and his kingdom fall into bitter, relentless, and uncompromising internecine strife, asking and giving no quarter,—then would it be a good day for this poor devil-ridden world. But no such good thing as this is happening, or ever will happen.—*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*

*Lessons.*—1. Every argument of truth and evidence of Divinity can be explained away, if only you are bad enough to do it. 2. Falsehood, if indulged, may lead you to lie in the most sacred matters, and utter the most depraved blasphemy. 3. Man has ultimately only the single alternative—to be devout or superstitious; you must be a believer in God, or in a devil. 4. There is no knave who is not a fool; for if he were not a fool, he would not be a knave.—*R. Glover.*

Ver. 23. *Christ's question.*—Jesus has questions to ask as well as His opponents. Too much attention is given to the answering of questions. We listen to the "How?" and the "Why?" of the sceptic; but are we alive to the advantage that we should gain if we were to propose questions for ourselves?

Vers. 28, 29. *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.*—Blasphemy, that is, speaking against. But thought is speech to God. "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter," says Keats. Heard blasphemy is bitter: is unheard blasphemy less bitter to the ear of the Holy One? And speech is deed. Therefore, "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words

thou shalt be condemned." The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not demand audible speech. At the very time Christ used this unparalleled language, He was replying to the inaudible speech of the Pharisees: "Knowing their *thoughts*, He said unto them." So the essential thing is not in the speech, but in the object of it. "No man can do these miracles except God be with him"—that was the witness of the truth they knew. "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils"—that was the lie to their own sense of right. And it was because of that deliberate lie against the light within them that Jesus told them of the sin that hath never forgiveness. Since the departure of Jesus from the earth, the Holy Spirit has been to men the inner light. Magnificent gift! Momentous responsibility! He takes the place of *it* within us. We no longer obey *it*, resist *it*, quench *it*: we obey, resist, quench *Him*. He is the Advocate, come to plead the cause of right within us, the cause of righteousness and judgment against us. He convicts the *world* of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.—*Expository Times*.

Ver. 29. *The soul incapacitated for repentance*.—Strength, Purity, Light, Life, and Love,—are not these the foundation pillars of the throne of God? And these are the words under

which the nature and work of the Holy Ghost are revealed to us. Now suppose a man by an act of deliberate and conscious choice renounces this God of Holiness, this Spirit of Light, and Life, and Love,—saying, "These are things that I hate. Death and corruption are better than the life of God. His love I trample on and despise." Imagine a man speaking to himself after this fashion, and proceeding to shape his life accordingly. Would not that be a kind of blasphemy which might well incapacitate the soul for repentance, and so, as a necessary consequence, for forgiveness?—*W. R. Huntington, D.D.*

The man who blasphemes against the God within him—who calls that right which he knows and feels to be wrong, and who, knowing the good, deliberately says to evil, "Be thou my good,"—is not to be forgiven in this age. No, verily: for this age has brought him all that it has to bring, and he has rejected it: the most penetrating and intimate ministries of Divine Grace have been vouchsafed him, and he has resisted them: let him feel the *judgments* of this age, since he will not accept its choicest gifts; let him pass out of this age only to enter into the discipline of the next: and as he suffers these æonial judgments, let him consider and reconsider himself, lest he also lose the ages beyond.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 31–35.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xii. 46-50; LUKE viii. 19-21.)

*Kinship to Christ*.—Notwithstanding the organised opposition of the religious leaders, crowds continue to surround Christ, eagerly listening to His gracious words. But His friends and relatives, already convinced that "He is beside Himself" (ver. 21), now induce His mother to accompany them into His presence. The reason must have been, observes Calvin, "either that they were anxious about Him, or that they were desirous of instruction; for it is not without some good reason that they endeavour to approach Him, and it is not probable that those who accompanied the Holy Mother were unbelievers. The warmth of natural affection may have carried them beyond the bounds of propriety; but I have no doubt that they were led by pious zeal to seek His society." One

would fain believe that this estimate of their conduct is the true one, rather than the harsher judgment of Chrysostom, that the Blessed Virgin wanted to make a public display of her maternal authority. But, whatever the motive may have been, whether wholly innocent or partly blameworthy, Christ seizes the opportunity to set forth eternal truths of far-reaching import.

I. **A sad fact.** "So far from blood relations being, as a matter of course, helpers and promoters of spiritual duty or lofty sacrifice in the home of which they are inmates, the history of all times goes to prove the very contrary; in the persecutions endured for the faith's sake the daughter has risen against her mother, and the father against his son, and the house has been divided against itself; and the sword (not of the Spirit) has invaded it. We may have to choose between Christ and some one who, after the flesh, is as dear to us as our own soul. Which shall we go with? (Matt. x. 37.) A call to the mission field, or the preference of a quiet Christian life to a career of splendour and fashion, or a profession which implies the reproach of Christ rather than the riches of Egypt, has often disturbed families and parted kinsfolk" (Bishop Thorold).

II. **A great principle.**—Christ here declares most emphatically, that obedience, not privilege, constitutes true kinship to Him—that the spiritual fellowship which He came from heaven to establish, and which all may equally participate in, is a far higher and more precious thing than any mere earthly tie. So far, however, from in any way depreciating the natural relationships of brother, sister, mother, He adds to them fresh dignity and interest, by adopting them as fit terms for the description of His closest union and communion with believers. "It was not that He denied the claims of the flesh, but that He was sensitive to other, subtler, profounder claims of the spirit and spiritual kinship. He would not carelessly wound a mother's or a brother's heart, but the life Divine had also its fellowships and affinities, and still less could He throw these aside" (Dean Chadwick). As Bengel puts it: He contemns not the mother, but He places the Father first.

III. **An abiding law.**—"There is no tie so close, so holy, so blessed, so exquisitely tender, as that which joins one regenerate soul to another in the mystical body of Christ. The joy of the common salvation, the inheritance of the faith once delivered to the saints, the fellowship in the gospel, the inexpressible experience of the love which passeth knowledge, the hope laid up in heaven, the sympathy and zeal and ardour for the honour of the Saviour—these constitute an unity closer, surer, fonder, deeper, than the dearest earthly tie which human souls can know" (Bishop Thorold). The tender bonds of family affection can find stability nowhere but in Christ, the "Elder Brother," who is the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father, from whom every family both in heaven and earth is named.

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 31. *The family visit.*—We place this visit of the mother and brethren of Jesus immediately after His return to Capernaum, and we attribute it to Pharisaic opposition, which either filled those relatives of Jesus with fear for His safety, or made them sincerely concerned about His proceedings. Only if it meant

some kind of interference with His mission, whether prompted by fear or affection, would Jesus have so disowned their relationship.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

*Christ's outside kindred.*—They were without—that is, not in the inner circle of the crowd standing by Him and with Him, but on the outside of the crowd, loving Him, but wanting



to get Him away from His present surroundings. They no doubt thought Him unwisely carried away with enthusiasm, and that He was spoiling or hurting His cause as well as imperiling His life. Jesus has many outside kindred—those who admire Him, and appreciate to some extent His sublime teaching on ethical points; but they do not understand Him as the world's Saviour; especially they do not understand the significance of His death and His relations to all men irrespective of persons, and the nature of that new kingdom of men and women "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, . . . but of God."—*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*

*Weigh the calls.*—This was a call to give up His work. We must be careful to weigh the calls that come to us. Even the calls of kindly consideration may need to be resisted.

*Vers. 33-35. Lessons.*—1. The power of interfering with others in such a way as to do good is a very rare possession. 2. Sometimes it is our duty to take a course that grieves dear friends. In such cases aim at doing as Jesus did—blending perfect gentleness with perfect firmness. 3. Nearness to Christ is a matter not of race, or place, or time, but of heart. 4. Let all seek this essential grace that was the root grace of Christ's character—and live daily, hourly, doing the will of our Father in heaven.—*R. Glover.*

*The false and the true family of Jesus.*—1. The one would watch over Him and His cause; the other will be watched over by Him. 2. The one would lead Him; the other will be led by Him. 3. The one would save Him; the other will be saved by Him. 4. The one would restrain and bring Him into danger; the other will be restrained and bound by His Word and Spirit.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*Ver. 34. The Church's relationship to Christ.*—Christ here speaks of the relationship which the Church on earth can hold to Him. 1. It can be, as it were, a "mother" to Him—can,

as that highly favoured and blessed among women, bear Him, again and again, to a perishing world which needs Him,—*can*, I say, be as she was, but *is not*, because lofty purity and lowly submission to God's will are lacking. 2. Or the Church can be as those "brothers" were—those who tenderly cared for Him—those who misunderstood Him, and would fain protect Him from Himself—those who at length learned to believe in Him, and to suffer with Him, and to stand witness before kings for His sake: thus can the Church be, when it gets the brotherly heart, and thinks more of Christ than of self. 3. Notice that Christ did not say, when He spoke of the relationship man can hold to Him, "Behold My Father." That is a position no man by himself, nor all men put together, can hold to Him. For the father's position (and half the world's evils, domestic, political, and religious, have arisen from forgetfulness of this) is the originating and governing position. The true son only then lives when he does the will of his father. And the Christ, who saves, admits no man's right to stand in this governing, regulative position to Him.—*J. W. Owen.*

*Ver. 35. Christ's spiritual kindred.*—Wonderful words! 1. Think of it, busy toiler, far away, perhaps, from the home of your youth; a young man here in this city, it may be, with few friends. Here is an assurance of the Saviour's brotherly kindness. 2. Or you may be a daughter trying to lift a mother's burden or a father's care. No matter how poor or needy, if you are doing God's will, Christ calls you His sister. 3. You may be a wearied, perplexed mother, with many little ones, and disheartened with the work and burden of home, where the bitter and sweet mingle. Jesus calls you "Mother," and makes Himself your "Son"!—*E. P. Parker, D.D.*

*The gospel of the family of God.*—We have had the gospel of the

kingdom of God, and glad tidings it has been indeed; but have we not here something even better? It is much to be permitted to hail the Son of God as our King: is it not better still to be encouraged to hail Him as a Brother, to know that all that is sweetest and tenderest in the dear words "brother," "sister," "mother," can be imported into our relation to Him? How it endears the heavenly relationship, and hallows the earthly!—*J. M. Gibson, D.D.*

*The family of love and service.*—All those who have been impelled by a higher inspiration, and those who, subjugated by God's call, have dedicated their whole life to His service, will understand without difficulty these words of Jesus. Every strong conviction ends by taking possession of us; it overcomes and absorbs us, and

tears us ruthlessly from everything else; it becomes our sole object, and outside it nothing seems to touch us: those who do not understand it are strangers to us; those who attack it are our enemies; those who love and serve it with us are our true, our only family.—*Father Didon.*

*All to each.*—He does not say that one of us is to Him as a "brother," and another is to Him as a "sister," and another is to Him as a "mother," according to the several features of our different characters; but the man who "does the will of God," the same occupies, at one and the same time, all those endearing relationships. He stands in the confidence of the "brother," in the fondness of the "sister," and in all the holy and respectful attachment even of a "mother."—*Jas. Vaughan.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER III.

Ver. 2. *The world watches Christians.*—"Now lads," said the late Duncan Matheson, the Scottish evangelist, to a lot of boys who had been converted at his meetings, "the people here are not in the habit of reading their Bible to learn what God says to them, but I'll tell you what they'll read. They'll read your lives and ways very carefully to see if you are really what you profess to be. And mind you this, if they find your lives to be inconsistent with your profession, the devil will give them this for an excuse in rejecting Christ." Very true indeed are these words. Would that we could lay them more constantly to heart! The life of the professing Christian is the only book of evidences that many people ever read in reference to Christianity. The Christian professor's life is thus the world's Bible. When there are inconsistencies and flaws in it, then the world makes these a plea against religion. Let us remember that the world's eyes are upon us. Let us keep our book of evidences clear and pure.

Ver. 5. *Anger checks wrongdoing.*—It might at first appear well for mankind if the bee were without its sting; but upon recollection it will be found that the little animal would then have too many rivals in sharing its labours. A hundred other lazy animals, fond of honey and hating labour, would intrude upon the sweets of the hive, and the treasure would be carried

off for want of armed guardians to protect it. And it might at first appear well for mankind if the principle of anger were not a part of our constitution. But then we should be overrun with rogues. The presence of anger, always ready to start forth when an injury is done or intended, has the effect of suppressing much gross impudence and intolerable oppression. The sting of noble anger applied to a dastard who has bullied the weak or injured the unoffending has a most salutary influence in restraining him for the future, and in warning his fraternity of the like punishment which is all ready for them. But man should control his anger as the bee does her sting. It is not to be perpetually projected on every possible occasion, but to be used only when impertinence, laziness, injustice, or fraud requires.—*Scientific Illustrations.*

Ver. 9. *Waiting is a harder duty than doing.*—In a certain battle a detachment of cavalry was kept inactive. It was hard for the men to do nothing but wait, while the fight was going on before them. At last, in the crisis of the battle, the command was given them to charge, and that body of fresh men, sweeping down like a torrent, turned the tide of battle. So, in the battle of life, waiting is often the surest means to victory. And it is comforting to know that where we see only the unsightly bud, God sees the perfect flower; where we see the rough pebble

He sees the flashing diamond. Patient waiting and patient doing have at last their reward. The traveller who has patiently toiled up the weary passes of the Alps looks down at last with triumph on glorious Italy. Those who have sat by the bedside of a sick friend by night will know how gladly they welcomed the morning. The laurel crown which the victor at Olympia received was in itself of little value; it was prized as a sign of the victory that had come through hard strife. There is a great battle going on in the world—the strife between good and evil. In that strife we are engaged; and the harder the battle is, the sweeter will be the victory. During the battle of Waterloo, Wellington, it is said, took out his watch, and said, "I can hold out for so long. Blucher will be here within an hour, so victory is sure." The Christian can in like manner dismiss all fear as to the result of the conflict in which he is engaged. Though the conflict be sore, though the sword pierce the soul, he knows that the Captain of salvation will not fail him.

Ver. 14. *Preaching*.—The more lax, the less laboured the style, the nearer it comes to colloquial language, the better. I am convinced that one of the things which make my ordinary sermons tell from the pulpit is this very circumstance—that I write precisely as I would talk, and that my sermons are as nearly as possible extemporaneous effusions. . . . When the Archdeacon and Mr. Watson say the sermon will (D.G.) do good, though not add to my character as an author, I hesitate not for one moment to publish: for what does my character signify? and how gladly would I sacrifice all its respectability as a writer, to do good to a single soul!—*From a letter of Dean Hook.*

*Solemnity of preaching*.—Dr. John Brown, speaking of a minister's leaving his people for another pastorate, says that he mentally exclaims, "There they go! when next we meet it will be at the Judgment!"

*Qualifications of a good preacher*.—Ten qualifications are given of a good preacher by Luther. He should be able to preach plainly and in order. He should have a good head. Good power of speech; a good voice; and a good memory. He should be sure of what he means to say, and be ready to stake body and life, goods and glory, on its truth. He should know when to stop. He should study diligently, and suffer himself to be vexed and criticised by every one.

Ver. 18. *St. Matthew's example* led to one of the holiest lives recorded in the annals of the early Church. One of the most able and useful men in the North African Church was the Bishop Nulgentius. He had been a receiver of taxes, but one day it occurred to him, "May not I, like Matthew, become

from a tax-gatherer a preacher of the gospel?" Accordingly he renounced his worldly employment, sought Holy Orders, and was ultimately a most useful bishop.

Ver. 19. *Judas an evidence to the worth of Christianity*.—That which is most valuable and excellent in itself is most liable to be counterfeited. And it is no disparagement to a real diamond, a pure piece of gold, or a genuine bank-note, that they are liable to be imitated. We should act in the one case as we do in the other—be upon our guard against deception, learn to distinguish between the precious and the vile, and set a greater value upon that which we find pure and genuine.

Ver. 21. *The world's estimate of Christian zeal*.—The Rev. Rowland Hill, on one occasion, strained his voice, raising it to the highest pitch, in order to warn some persons of impending danger, and so rescued them from peril. For this he was warmly applauded. But when he elevated his voice to a similar pitch in warning sinners of the error and evil of their ways, and in order to save their souls from a still greater peril, the same friends who before had praised him now pronounced him fool and fanatic.

*Zeal*.—When some one expostulated with Duncan Matheson, the evangelist, that he was killing himself with his labours, and ought to have rest, he replied, "I cannot rest whilst souls are being lost: there is all eternity in which to rest after life is done."

*Earnestness in work*.—Soon after Dr. John Morison's ordination, a neighbouring minister called on him, and said, "You are doing too much; you must take care that you do not overwork yourself." "Depend upon it," replied Morison, "the lazy minister dies first." Six months later he was called to the death-bed of this same minister. "Do you remember what you once said to me?" asked the dying man. Morison could only reply falteringly, "Oh, don't speak of that!" "Yes, but I must speak of it," said his friend; "it was the truth. Work, work while it is called day, for now the night is coming when I cannot work."

Vers. 23-26. *Christ's actions prove His Divine mission*.—When the Netherlanders broke away from the bondage of Spain, they still professed to be loyal subjects of King Philip, and in the king's name went out to fight against the king's armies. That was a kind of loyalty which Philip refused to recognise. The scribes professed to believe that the devil was content with loyalty like this—that, in fact, he hugely enjoyed the destruction of his own works by Jesus, and supplied Him with all the help He wanted in that line. A sane man does not burn his insurance policy, and then set fire to his



house as a means of providing for his family. A loyal soldier will not undermine his own camp, and blow it into the air, as a means of increasing the strength of that camp. The captain who is anxious for the safety of his ship will not step down into the hold and bore a hole through the ship's bottom. Nor will Satan join in destroying his own kingdom. That Christ came and destroyed the works of the devil shows that He is Satan's enemy and Satan's conqueror.

*Ver. 29. Penal element in punishment.*—Punishment has surely an element which is purely penal—vindictive, if the word must be used, but with a Divine vindictiveness. And this seems to be the confession of the human heart in the most differing states of society. An Indian judge tells of the impression produced by a thief who cut off a child's wrists merely to get some tightly fastened bracelets. As the maimed stumps were held up in court, a hundred voices cried, "Death is not enough." In the south of France a monster amused herself with her paramour at the theatre, while her little boy was found slowly starved to death, with his cheek laid against a little dog which nestled close to him. Many cried, "The priests are right; there *must* be a hell."—*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*

*Unpardonable sin as to the body.*—There is an unpardonable sin that may be committed in connexion with the lungs, or with the heart, or with the head. They are strung with nerves as thick as beads on a string; and up to a certain point of excess or abuse of the nervous system, if you rebound there will be remission, and you will be put back, or nearly back, where you were before you transgressed nature's laws; but beyond that point—it differs in different men, and in different parts of the same man—if you go on transgressing, and persist in transgression, you will never get over the effect of it as long as you live.—*H. W. Beecher.*

*No hope for those past feeling.*—A man may misuse his eyes and yet see; but whosoever puts them out can never see again. One may misdirect his mariner's compass, and turn it aside from the north pole by a magnet or piece of iron, and it may recover and point right again; but whosoever destroys the compass itself has lost his guide at sea. So it is possible for us to sin and be forgiven: recovery through God's Spirit is not impossible. But if we so harden our hearts that they cannot feel the power of the Spirit, if we are past feeling, then there is no hope.

*A terrible text.*—In my first charge, when I was young and inexperienced, the very first grave task set me was to carry what comfort I could to my predecessor's widow, a singularly devout and devoted woman, who, in the depths of her grief, had come to the conclusion that she had committed "the

unpardonable sin," or "God would never have been so hard with her." No reasonings, no prayers, had the slightest effect upon her, or seemed so much as to touch the fixed idea she had taken to her heart. With an almost incredible ingenuity, she turned all grounds for hope into food for her despair. And in a few weeks she passed from my care into an asylum, only to be carried from the asylum to the grave. For years after I shrank from this text as if it had been guilty of murder. Such experiences bite deep.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

*Shrinking from the commission of this sin.*—A striking testimony to the power which these solemn words have had over the minds of men is afforded by the absence of this one sacred name, "the Holy Ghost," from all the vocabularies of profaneness. It shows how men whom we are accustomed to call bad men have often, after all, more reverence for what is holy than we give them credit for having—nay, more than they credit themselves with having. They may have committed crimes innumerable, and may have boasted of them; still, notwithstanding this, they shrink from the commission of what is worse than any crime—the unpardonable sin. The shrinking is to their credit.—*W. R. Huntington, D.D.*

*This sin consists not in words only.*—I remember the case of a young man in college, who, having fallen into a morbid state of mind under the pressure of religious excitement, went out upon a lonely bridge at midnight, and shouted out into the darkness words which he supposed to be the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It is not easy to believe that for doing this he fell under the fearful condemnation of which Christ speaks. On the other hand, it is not difficult to believe that the sin against the Holy Ghost may have been committed by persons who have never in any spoken utterance blasphemously used that awful name.—*Ibid.*

*Paralysis of the soul.*—It is told of some of the Hindoo ascetics, that they will at times, in compliance with a vow, keep a limb in a constrained position until the natural use of it is wholly lost and gone. May not the habitual putting of evil for good and good for evil bring on a similar paralysis of the soul? May not the devotees of the god of this world so keep the vows they make to him, as to rob themselves of the power to take the postures of a holier devotion?—*Ibid.*

*Eternal sin.*—

"A sin that passes!" Lo, one sad and high,  
Bearing a taper stately like a queen,  
Talks in her sleep—"Will these hands  
ne'er be clean?"

"What's done cannot be undone." She  
walks by

As she must walk through her eternity,

Bearing within her that which she hath been.

"The sin that I have sinn'd is but one scene,

Life is a manifold drama," so men cry.

Alas! the shadow follows thee too well.

The interlude outgrows its single part,

And every other voice is stricken dumb.

That which thou carriest to the silent dell

Is the eternal sin thou hast become.

The everlasting tragedy thou art!

*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*

Ver. 35. *The test of relationship is life.*—

If you go out into the woods in summer, you may see, high up on some tree, a branch with dry twigs and withered leaves. It seems to be a part of the tree. Yet, when you look closer, you find it has been broken away, and now it is only a piece of dead wood encumbering a living tree. The test of relationship with the tree is life—fruit-bearing. That is also the test of relationship with Christ. The power which binds the iron to the magnet is unseen, but real; the

iron so bound becomes itself a magnet: the power that binds believers to Christ, and makes them members of Him, is as real, though also unseen.

*All love in Christ.*—Light is one thing, though comprising in itself several hues. All the fair hues of nature inhere in the light—so that where there is no light, there is no colour. Wherever the light travels, it disparts its colours to natural objects—to one after this manner, to another after that—the emerald green to the leaves—to the flowers violet, and yellow, and crimson. And in the same manner all love is in Christ, and is from Him, as its Fountain-head and Centre, disparted among the various relations of human life. A ray from His light struggles forth in the care of the father, in the tenderness of the mother, in the active support of the brother or friend, in the sister's refined sympathy—nay, in the affectionate homage of the son. And this whole love, in all its manifold elements, is brought to converge, with unshorn beams, upon that thrice happy man or boy who does the will of God.—*Dean Goulbourn.*

## CHAPTER IV.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. For a description of the surrounding scenery, which doubtless furnished many of the illustrations used in the following parables, see Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 425-427; Thomson's *Land and the Book*, p. 402; Tristram's *Land of Israel*, p. 431.

Ver. 11. *Unto you*, who possess the hearing ear and inquiring heart, *is given the mystery* or inner secret of the kingdom of God; *but unto them that are without*, who listen only from curiosity or some even less worthy motive, *all the things* concerning that kingdom *are done in* (i.e. take the form of) *parables*.

Ver. 12. This veiling of spiritual truth is in mercy to those at present unable to receive it. The time may come when, with softened hearts, they will recall the teaching unheeded now; and then by the help of the parables embedded in their memory, they may rise to an appreciation of the things of the kingdom.

Ver. 21. "We lose much of the significance, if we think of the modern candle and candlestick carried about in the hand. On the contrary, it is the lamp of the house put upon the lamp-stand, or candelabrum, which is so elevated that any lamp upon it can lighten up all the interior."

Ver. 22. *Which shall not be manifested.*—*But that it should be manifested.* To be read in close connexion with vers. 11, 12, on which these words shed a flood of light. God's purposes are always merciful; His hidings are revealings in disguise.

Ver. 24. *Take heed what ye hear.*—There is a discipline of ear, as well as of tongue, hand, etc. Men are held responsible for the opportunities to hear good that they neglect, and for the voluntary exposure of their minds to evil influences. *With what measure ye mete.*—According to the attention bestowed in hearing the truth, and the diligence used in obeying its behests, will be the profit derived from it. Or there may be a special reference to the duty of handing on to others the spiritual knowledge we have acquired ourselves, and the clearer insight that the instructor himself gains while so doing. The last clause of the verse should probably read simply, *And more shall be given to you*: God is ever a liberal paymaster. "If ye diligently endeavour to do all the good you can, and teach it to others, the mercy of God will come in to give you both in the present life a sense to take in higher things and a will to do better things, and will add for the future an everlasting reward."

Ver. 25. The principle enunciated here is one that applies to every department of life. Nothing succeeds like success, or fails like failure. One thing leads the way to another of the same kind, whether it be triumph or defeat, gain or loss, etc. In the spiritual sphere, in particular, he who possesses the hearing ear and the understanding heart, will find them improve by use; while he who does not cultivate them is in danger of losing them altogether.

Ver. 29. **But as soon as the fruit is mature, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, etc.** Cp. Joel iii. 13 (LXX.). See also 1 Pet. i. 23-25; Rev. xiv. 14, 15.

Ver. 39. **Arose.—Awake. Peace, be still. Be silent! Be muzzled!** Mark alone preserves these words, which were doubtless addressed to "the prince of the power of the air," by whose agency the storm had arisen.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—20.

*Popular teaching of Jesus Christ.*—Good teaching is always seasonable. It is the first step to the attainment of larger blessing. Real knowledge enlarges the soul's capacity, and awakens new desire.

I. **The particular occasion.**—The multitude was great: universal eagerness was aroused to hear the wisdom of this strange Teacher. No private dwelling sufficed to accommodate the crowd. By common instinct they withdrew to the shore of the lake. 1. Outward circumstances are made tributary to the wise designs of Jesus. If the artificial temples reared by men are too narrow for the Divine purpose, material nature will provide a temple of the sublimest kind. Nor is this all. There is no reason why we should not conclude that, at the creation of Gennesaret's blue lake, this event was foreseen. *That* shelving, sandy beach had been, for long ages, intended as an auditorium for that human assemblage; and never had its capacity been put to its noblest use till then. Still, human art is not flung away in contempt. The Gracious King deigns to employ human helpers, and to work through human agencies, so far as He can. 2. Initial stages of Divine illumination. "He began to teach." As a human parent, dealing with children, begins with pictures and object-lessons, so deals Jesus Christ with men. He began with parables. To speak of things in the heavenly world *as they really are* would be to speak a language unintelligible to human auditors. In nature God's thoughts are projected before human eyes in material objects, and *these* the Son of God makes His starting-point. 3. A renewed endeavour to do men good. "Again He began." Full well He knew the dulness of men to apprehend spiritual truth. If He had depended upon immediate and visible results for inspiration of energy to continue His undertaking, hope would soon have expired. But His Divine patience is inexhaustible. "Line upon line, precept upon precept," is His sketch-plan. No apparent miscarriage daunts Him.

II. **The form of the Saviour's teaching.**—"In parables." 1. This form of teaching readily impresses the imagination. Interest is awakened. Attention is excited. It becomes evident that spiritual truth has vital connexion with visible things. *This* life is seen to be the groundwork of a nobler. 2. This form of teaching serves as a test of men's honesty. Some men will yield to the momentary gratification of hearing the parable, but will take no pains to solve its meaning. Or, as soon as they get a glimpse that it implies an unpleasant duty, they dismiss the matter unceremoniously. Herein is a test of their honesty and earnestness. If they will not take the pains to thrash the straw, grind the grain, they must starve. The sweet kernel of truth lies within, but the hard shell must first be broken. 3. Infinite issues hang on receiving aright parabolical teaching. Light comes to men in this form—a from the most suitable: if they reject the light, their darkness becomes their chosen doom. The Emancipator comes in a shape and dress they do not recognise: refusing his offices, their bondage becomes confirmed. A moment of heavenly oppor-



tunity occurs, which, if improved, leads on to spiritual fortune; *unimproved*, ends in curse.

**III. The revelation provided for the many: exoteric doctrine.**—The destiny of the seed was various. 1. One portion fell on the beaten track, and was at once doomed to fruitlessness. In Palestine pasture and corn-lands are unenclosed. Camels and pedestrians soon make a beaten path from village to village. The greatest expert could not prevent some seeds from falling on this camel track, which lay right across his field. Wild birds soon learnt from experience where to find unburied seed, and were always on the alert to find a meal. In prospect of a harvest such seeds were lost. 2. A second portion fell on stony ground, *i.e.* on shallow soil. Only the thinnest crust of earth covered the rock. In the first stage of growth all seed finds its nutriment within itself; therefore the first aspect of the young crop is quite as promising in a poor soil as in fattest loam. But the test of a scorching sun soon brings to light good rootage, or slender. The moisture exuding through the pores of the leaf found no continuous supply from the root-source. Hence the green blades soon became languid, faint, shrivelled, sere. 3. A third portion fell among the old roots of former wild growths. As soon as spring, with its revivifying influence, appeared, the old stumps of thorns broke forth into new life. Vigorous shoots and branches from these old roots monopolised space and air and light,—the young blades of corn were attenuated and sickly. The power to appropriate the nutritious elements of the soil was lacking; the young corn could not even stand erect. The processes of life were checked. The force needed for kernelling was spent. The hostility was too severe; life could not survive. 4. The fortunes of the fourth portion of the seed were prosperous. The seed fell into good ground. Nursed in the warm bosom of mother earth, it soon gave signs of life. The hidden germ swelled, burst the swathing bands of hard membrane, and sent its living rootlets in search of proper food. Day by day it obtained a larger hold on life. Duly the green stalks pierced the surface, and found nutrition from dew and air and sunlight. They grew, acquired strength, flowered, kernelled into grain, and when the stalks at length fell before the sickle, they yielded large increase. Yet the fruitfulness was not uniform. In part, proportionate to the fatness of the soil; in part, proportionate to the skill of the sower: thirty grains were found where one had been sown—a hundred for one in some instances were gained.

**IV. The higher revelation for the few: esoteric doctrine.**—Comparatively few in every age care for spiritual enlightenment. The many are absorbed in the care for bread, or in the care for riches. To *them* the visible is everything; the invisible, nothing. Yet a few everywhere—the true elect—examine, ponder, and reverently ask. To such the deeper meanings of the parable appear. 1. There is failure in a man's life through an unprepared condition of the soil. Secular traffic hardens all the better feelings of the heart. A man's soul, which should be penetrable, plastic, accessible to the light and love from heaven, becomes callous, repellent, indurated—until it has reached the final stage—"past feeling." In the proper condition of the mind, it is exquisitely suited to the reception of living seed; it is the seed's home and rest. Inquiry after truth is natural. But if the emotional nature become hardened by worldly pursuits, the seed is lost; it remains on the surface, and our sleepless foe removes it at once from the memory. The man wantonly allows himself to be despoiled of his choicest treasure. In harvest time he reaps confusion and shame. 2. There is failure also in man's best life through shallow feeling. To have sin pardoned is a joyous sensation—to be received as an adopted child is a rich privilege—to be assured of heaven is rapture. But presently the sun's face suffers eclipse—clouds gather. Friends scowl and load us with opprobrium. The cold sleet

of the world's hatred is showered upon us. Shares are laid for our feet. Our occupation is gone. Poverty and shame have to be faced. We cannot tread this rugged path. What? give up comfort, and riches, and prospects, and friends, and health for the sake of a slender hope of future joy? It is too much to ask. Men stumble at the terms; they go back to animal enjoyments. Alas! the seed is unfruitful. 3. Failure, too, may come about through attempted compromise of the earthly and the heavenly. The convictions of truth have taken a deeper hold than in the foregoing case. The man cannot afford to forego religion—that would be ruinous! But he will relegate it to a corner. His feverish pursuit of riches need not destroy his faith. He will, he must, be rich. But his riches shall not extinguish his piety. So he reasons; and all the while the green withes of evil habit are becoming tough as steel. Still dreaming of freedom, he is suddenly cast out of the kingdom as the veriest slave of mammon. Again the seed is fruitless. 4. Success comes only through acting in concert with God. The honest mind says, "Let the truth come in! Welcome light, come from what quarter it may!" He can afford to wait for blessed fruit till harvest time. Truth *cannot* injure a man: error or indolence must. "He *receives* the Word." He reflects on what he hears, until it has an abiding-place in the understanding. From the understanding it passes into the conscience, and becomes conviction of duty. Thence it goes down into the affections—roots itself there—and becomes new and holy experience. —*J. D. Davies.*

*The parable of the sower.*—Unlike all other teachers, this Divine Teacher, in this His first parable, displays the same perfection of method, the same mastery of this life in its highest relations to spiritual truth, as in His latest utterances. Very notable, also, is the framework of this parable, in its adaptation to the Master's mission and that of all His followers. Seed-sowing was His work—first for its own immediate usefulness, then for our imitation.

**I. The spiritual husbandman's chief work is to sow the Word.**—He is to multiply what God hath revealed, not human speculations, not current news, not scientific discoveries, however true or helpful in their sphere, not ingenious theories about the Word. That Word finds illustration in every phase of the universe; but fatal the error that abandons the spirit and work of reverent interpretation for that of substitution.

**II. He who sows the true seed may count upon a sure and large harvest**—A single sentence, often only a word, implanted within the soul, reconstructs the whole life, and builds the world anew and for all the future.

**III. Every one, of moderate intelligence even, is a sower of seed in the world's broad field of spiritual harvests.**—Every life, however circumstanced, repeats itself, or in some way enters into other lives, with a multiplying power for good or evil, of which the world's grain-harvests are a fit and vivid, though inadequate, illustration.

**IV. The emphasis of our Lord's teaching refers to the seed's fruitfulness according to the condition of the hearts receiving it.**—Unlike the ground, hearts are under self-control. Not passively inert, they can take condition favourable to the Word, and become fruitful beyond any chance or doubt. 1. It is safe to say that our care in hearing the Word is not proportioned to its importance. All religious life is antagonised by the adversary, but his best energies are centred upon keeping the truth from finding lodgment. It easily sets its roots if it have opportunity, but no seed will fruit if at once caught away. Wayside hearers leave the Word, however faithfully presented, to such speedy destruction. Jesus describes such as those who hearing the Word understand it not. In epitome this includes every condition of mind and heart barred against the truth. The vital truth is the helplessness of seed in hearts

so preoccupied as to be steeled against its lodgment. This truth is reinforced by the revealed agency of Satan. He catches away the Word by coinciding with the heart's pre-existing hostility. To the sensualist he heightens the promise of forbidden pleasures, lest a better life may get his attention and choice. The worldling he points to heights of power or gain or fame not yet reached, and with which nothing must be permitted to interfere. To the scoffing sceptic he paints the conquests of controversy, the sweets of destructive onslaught upon received and time-honoured doctrines. 2. The next part of the figure refers to an underlying rock formation covered with a light layer of soil. This is a fitting type of natures quick to respond in feelings warm and sympathetic, but lacking in the underlying virtues of reason, will, and conscience. With these a man has "root in himself"; without them he is carried about by the enthusiasm of the hour or moment. The quick sensibilities have their uses. Any soul devoid of them is seriously lacking in equipment for life's best enjoyment and work. But with them there should be fixed convictions of one's own, the combined product of clear reason, a sensitive conscience, and persistent will. This is the sub-soil into which the roots of principles thrust themselves, as do those of the wind-beaten oak, under all the blasts of tribulation or persecution. 3. Here we are to think not so much of a visible growth of thorns as of a root-infested soil, the roots long and deeply planted and holding their places with stubborn thoroughness. The soil is deep enough and of ample strength; but its resources are absorbed by these preoccupying thorns, whose roots hold the field and promptly spring up, starving the good seed. Worldly anxieties, the deceitful promises of wealth, mere self-indulgence, called pleasure, have a firm anchorage in the natural heart. The renewed heart must enthrone service of the Lord Jesus in the building of His universal kingdom. This may be only in germ, but if genuine it will have a growing mastery and final supremacy, the thorn-roots all eradicated. The best eradication, because easiest and quickest, is a transformation of "cares, riches, and pleasures" into reinforcements of the Lord's work. These pre-existing roots become fertilisers and feeders of good soil. The Queen's broad arrow marks and secures England's possessions. The soul converted to Christ may put the Cross upon all riches or proper pursuits and pleasures, the Master's kingdom supreme in its rounded life. 4. Two points of profitable inquiry concerning the good-ground hearers: How can any unrenowned heart be called "good ground," and what determines the differing degrees of fruitage? While no natural heart is holy, it may have moral qualities favourable to receiving good seed and for an easy incorporation of its life. A heart tender and true, a knowledge of truth broad and deep, a conscience sensitive and controlling, pursuits honourable and useful—these furnish conditions of ready and vigorous growth when the seed finds lodgment. Great the encouragement to persistent effort in the moral training of children and youth! When conversion occurs a rich fruitage follows, because of the good ground thus carefully and continuously prepared. The fruitage is measured by such antecedent preparation. Towering corn and wheat cover the prairie once burdened with flowers and waving grass. We must not omit, in closing, some thought of the momentous responsibility of hearing the Word. How vital its relation to present life and future destiny! And yet what is done with less deliberation or thoroughness?—*S. L. B. Spence.*

*The Sower and the seed.*—This parable may be regarded as introductory to all the rest, and preparatory to that method of teaching which Christ in His Divine wisdom saw fit to adopt. Unless the drift of this, the first and plainest of the parables, be understood, it is useless to proceed to more difficult ones, which presuppose an acquaintance with the ordinary rules of parabolic instruction.



In the parables afterwards delivered that was actually done which is here only described: the Sower sowed the Word, with the different results that He Himself foretells in this parable. Or we may say that this very parable is a portion of that Divine seed which then began to be sown. This doctrine of the preparation of the heart to receive the gospel may itself be as variously received as any other portion of evangelical truth.

**I. The free grace of God, which is the corner-stone of the whole fabric of revealed truth, is the foundation on which this parable is constructed.**—

1. Moved by His own infinite goodness—the same goodness which originally prompted Him to call man into existence—God “went forth,” as it were, came out of His place, to sow the seed of Divine truth in the hearts of His creatures. Whatever revelations of Himself He has been pleased to make, from the time when He talked with our first parents until the present day, the Sower has never ceased to scatter over the wide field of the human family the seeds of that knowledge which “maketh wise unto salvation.” 2. This grand operation of sowing the Word, as it proceeded from unbounded goodness, so has it always been conducted with unerring wisdom—with that wisdom which looks to the end, which contemplates great results, comprehensive benefits (Luke ii. 14). 3. As we survey the world’s history, we see the Great Sower marking out, and as it were enclosing, certain portions of the common field to be cultivated with particular care, while the rest was to all appearance left in a state of nature. So it was, avowedly, under the Jewish dispensation; so it is now, actually at least, under the Christian. Actually, but not designally. The design of the dispensation of grace is, to make known the glad tidings of salvation to all nations for the obedience of faith (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47). 4. The Sower still goes forth, by His agents and ministers, to sow the Word of Life (Eph. iv. 11-13). The commission is unlimited, the supply of grace and strength unbounded; the deficiency is in the human instruments alone.

**II. The various receptions which are accorded by men to the free grace of God.** -1. Here are three descriptions of persons whom “the Word preached does not profit,” etc. (Heb. iv. 2). Their characters are exactly discriminated in vers. 15-19. Any hearer who desires to know the cause of his own unprofitableness may sit down before this faithful mirror, and in one or other of the three reflexions presented by it he will be sure to find his own. 2. Note the points of agreement between the three classes of unprofitable hearers. (1) They all hear the Word. This is partly the gracious provision of the Sower, who sows plentifully (James i. 5). But, besides, there is a natural disposition in men to “hear the Word,” independent of the reception they may eventually give it. (2) They all, in a certain sense, receive the Word. So it is with hearers in general. They “receive the Word with joy.” They like to hear. They go away with the intention of coming again. They do come again. They become regular hearers. Hearing the Word becomes a habit with them. They feel a certain gratification in the mere act of hearing, and so they fancy they have derived benefit from it. Vain delusion! (3) They all “bring no fruit to perfection.” The first sort never believe the Word at all; the second have faith, but such faith as will not abide the test of tribulation or persecution because of the Word; the third might endure afflictions, but yield to temptations of a different kind (ver. 19). Thus the end of all is the same. Some may advance further towards maturity than others; some may exhibit the blade, others the ear, but none “the full corn in the ear.” At the best they are “double-minded men,” “halting between two opinions,” “unstable in all their ways.” 3. There is yet another class of hearers, standing entirely by itself. It consists of those who “hear the Word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit.” The seed that is sown here, finding a soil congenial to it—“an honest and good heart”—and

watered by the dews of heaven, "takes root downward, and bears fruit upward." Such an one, "nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine," "grows in grace," etc. (2 Pet. iii. 18). The "fruit of the Spirit" manifests itself in his words and deeds. By the grace of God, he "keepeth himself; and that wicked one," who is always at hand to catch away the Word sown in the heart, "toucheth him not." Afflictions and temptations, however they may unsettle him for a time, "nevertheless afterward yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness." Even "the cares of this world, and the lusts of other things," from which no one is altogether exempt, although they may check the growth of the good seed in the heart, do not choke it; they may make it less fruitful, but not "barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *Christ teaching in the ship* a parable itself of the kingdom of heaven. 1. A figure of its form. (1) The evangelical ministry. (2) The Church. (3) Missions. 2. A figure of its condition. (1) Small beginnings. (2) Poverty. (3) Mobility. (4) Freedom.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*An imperfect Church*, an unworthy pulpit, and poor hearers may nevertheless form a true Church, accepted of God.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 2. *Why Christ spoke in parables.*—1. That the Scripture might be fulfilled (Ps. lxxviii. 2). 2. That we might know that Christ spake with the same spirit with which all God's prophets in the old time spake, whose writings are full of parables. 3. That He might descend to the capacity of the most simple, who best understand and remember homely illustrations. 4. That His auditors might take occasion to ask questions (ver. 10). 5. That the mysteries of God's heavenly kingdom might be hidden from the scornful (vers. 11, 12). 6. That every man, in his occupation and ordinary vocation, might be taught those things which concern his soul's health: as this parable may be termed the ploughman's gospel; he that meditates on it, when he ploughs his ground, may have a sermon always before him, every furrow being a line, every grain of corn a lesson bringing forth some fruit.

*Rules for the interpretation of parables.*—1. Careful attention to the occasion of them. 2. Close adherence to the one truth or duty meant to be enforced. It is much the same here as in considering a fine painting; a comprehensive view of the whole will have a happy and striking effect, but that effect will not be felt if the eye is held to detached parts of the picture without regarding the relation they bear to the rest. 3. Great care in reasoning from the parables to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. (1) An intemperate use of figures tends to sensualise the mind and deprave the taste. (2) By the misapplication of figures false ideas are given to the hearer of the things they stand for. (3) The reasoning injudiciously from types and figures begets a kind of faith that is precarious and ineffectual. An enthusiast, struck with appearances, hastily yields his assent to a proposition, without considering the evidence carefully. But as soon as his passions cool, and the false glare upon his imagination subsides, his faith dies away, and the fruit expected from it proves utterly abortive. "*Parables are more ancient than arguments,*" says Lord Bacon: and it is not difficult to see why. A parable is winning and attractive, because it is a narrative or story: it is easy to be understood, since it deals with familiar events and actions, with sayings and doings of common life, which

are well known to all its hearers: lastly, it is acceptable and effective, because it does not arouse antagonism and opposition in the mind of the hearer, as argument frequently does.

*Christ's thought for the multitude.*—It is easy to have tender regard and helpful disposition towards the few kindred spirits, but Jesus thought of the needs of any and all of His fellow-men to which He could minister. But this spirit of beneficence was always guided by unerring wisdom as to methods. We may blindly yield to benevolent impulses in ways self-defeating and often harmful. He thoroughly measured the situation of His opening ministry, and taught by parable which should both reveal and conceal. Idle curiosity, much less personal prejudice or selfish scheming, is never the condition of helpful hearing. Concealment by parable was a favour to all who would have wrested the truth to their own hurt.—*S. L. B. Speare.*

Ver. 3. *The sower* is now any and every one who rehearses and enforces the same doctrines as our Lord. It matters little who or what he is, so long as he has full store of the good seed and is faithful in scattering it. The harvest tells nothing as to the husbandman—whether a master or slave—save his wise and trustful labour. Results are the same in either case, and these are the objects in all sowing.

*Analogies.*—1. Between the sowing of seed and the teaching of truth. 2. Between the earth's reception of the seed and man's reception of the truth. 3. Between the earth's response to the seed sown and man's response to the truth taught. So too it is the same God—1. Who gives man seed to sow and truth to learn. 2. Who prepares the earth for the reception of the seed and the heart of man for the reception of the truth. 3. Who causes the seed to grow and bring forth fruit, and who guides and helps man to carry into practice the truth which he learns.

Vers. 5, 6. *No depth of earth.*—At first, when the wheat sprouts, the blade which it sends up to the surface is green and beautiful. But after a while the field of emerald loveliness looks suddenly sere and yellow; the blades seem to droop and languish as if a worm were at the root. This remarkable change is caused by what the farmers call the "*speurin' brash*" (Scotch for "weaning brash"). The corn is weaned from its mother's milk, as it were; for the supply of food which was stored up for it in the seed is now exhausted, and it has to seek food for itself in the soil and air. It has not yet strength to do so, and therefore fades and becomes sickly. It falls off, just as a human child falls off when weaned. If, in such circumstances, there is soil enough, it soon recovers; if, however, there is no room beneath and fierce sun above, then because it has no root it withers.—*H. Macmillan, D.D.*

Ver. 9. *Eloquent hearing* is indispensable to effective preaching: it is as necessary that listeners should be taught how to hear, as it is that preachers should be taught what or how to speak.—*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*

*Qualities to be cultivated by gospel hearers.*—1. Attention. The good hearer stirs himself up to listen. He trains himself to follow the speaker. His hearing is an opportunity, and he takes care to make the most of it. 2. Meditation. What he "hears" he "keeps" by reflecting upon it, and assimilating it for his own edification and growth in grace. Says Willmott: "Proportion an hour's reflexion to an hour's reading, and so dispirit the book into the student." So I would say: Let every time of hearing be followed by a time of meditation, that the seed which has fallen on the soil may, as it were, be "harrowed" into it by the process. 3. Obedience. To hear without obeying is to harden the heart; for, as Bishop Butler says, "passive impressions grow weaker by being repeated." But the acting on what



we hear prepares us for being better hearers next time, and quickens the receptivity of the soul. Even among good hearers, however, there will be differences; some will make more of their opportunities than others.—*Ibid.*

*Divine truth needs attention.*—Perhaps our Saviour used so frequently to conclude His Divine discourses with, "*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,*" to teach us that there is no employment of our faculties, that more deserves their utmost attention, than the scrutiny of Divine truths (Isa. iv. 3; Rom. x. 17).—*R. Boyle.*

Vers. 10-12. *Parables necessary for outsiders.*—Parables are, so to speak, forced upon the Lord. They are His only method of dealing with this loose mob that is following Him. He cannot venture to confide to them His full mind, for it would but confuse and repel them. So long as it was His disciples He could address them openly, as in the Sermon on the Mount, with plain, strong directions. So it had been, apparently, at the first; but now that His fame had spread—now that a mixed multitude is swarming around Him—He is driven to protect His doctrine from degradation, misunderstanding, confusion. It is not enough that He has in His hands pearls to give; He must see to it, also, that He distributes them aright to those that will profit by them. So the parables express the guarded caution with which the great revelation of the Father must be made. It is not enough that God should reveal His love for fallen man; but more than that, He must do it in a way of condescension to all the gradations of darkness into which men have fallen. Here is the irony of the terrible passage quoted by our Lord from Isaiah in answer to the wondering question of the disciples why He should speak in parables. Why in parables? Because so many, though they willingly listen, are in such a state that, hearing they hear not, and seeing they see not; it is because "this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull

of hearing, and their eyes are closed, lest at any time, seeing with their eyes, and hearing with their ears, they should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." "Lest they should be converted, and I should heal them." That is the dreadful thing that would happen; that is the dreadful thing that they are bent on postponing. That is the irony of love picturing the postponement of the good it brings; and since the facts are so, since men have determined that the process of their salvation shall be slow, and difficult and gradual, therefore Christ has conformed to their ways; He has qualified the blinding light, He has shadowed it down to the dusk in which men abide, He has divided His teaching into stages, so as to protect these obstinate hearts against their own prejudices, He has fallen back on these parables. Even those who most vehemently repudiate the more emphatic message, even those who might in indignation take up stones to kill Him if they heard the full claim, will stand and listen to these parables; and if they listen and are pleased to walk away without further question no irremediable harm will be done, only they will be much as they were before, only they will postpone the day of possibility, they will not have been brought up near enough to the fire to be scorched by it, they will have been saved the uppermost disaster. But, on the other hand, if there are any there who have ears to hear and eyes to see, then the parable will work its perfect work upon them, they will never be satisfied by its mere beauty, they will feel the prickings of a Diviner secret, the parables will quicken and animate them into more eager expectation; something in them will provoke them, they will be restless until they have gone further, they will press in with the other disciples into the house with the Master, they will insist on being told what it all means. And it is these persistent, clamouring questioners to whom it is given to know the

mysteries of heaven. These will ask and knock, and asking will receive, and knocking it will be opened unto them.—*Canon Scott Holland.*

*Double aspect of parables.*—Inasmuch as a parable is the presentation of some spiritual truth under the guise of an incident belonging to the material sphere, it follows, from its very nature, that it may either reveal or hide the truth, and that it will do the former to susceptible and the latter to unsusceptible souls. The eye may either dwell upon the coloured glass or on the light that streams through it; and, as is the case with all revelations of spiritual realities through sensuous mediums, gross and earthly hearts will not rise above the medium, which to them, by their own fault, becomes a medium of obscurity, not of revelation. This double aspect belongs to all revelation, which is both a savour of life unto life and of death unto death.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*The veil of allegory.*—The ideas of the Christ of God are thinly veiled in parables, so as to conceal them from idle and corrupt minds, who hate the Cross, and do not think truth worth their steady attention. But this slight veil of allegory enhances their beauty for those who are worthy of initiation into the “mysteries of the kingdom,” just as the sun and moon appear more beautiful for the thin luminous mists through which they rise above the horizon, as they turn the vapours into gold.—*E. White.*

Ver. 10. *Explanation of difficulties to be sought.*—As in the schools of human knowledge, so soon as the lecture is read, it is the scholars' duty to question among themselves how to parse and construe it, and when they doubt to have recourse to their grammar rules, by which all construction is examined; and when they do not understand a hard rule to come for a resolution unto their master, who is as it were a living grammar and a walking book,—so likewise in God's academy, in the divinity school, when

either the lecture of the law is read, or sermon on the gospel ended, it is your part to reason among yourselves, as you walk abroad in the fields or talk at home in your house, how this and that may be construed; and when you cannot resolve one another, with the men of Berea, to search the Scripture daily, whether those things are so, to try the spirits of men by the Spirit of God, for the Bible is our divinity grammar, according to which all our lessons ought to be parsed and construed. And if ye meet with a difficult place, repair to God's usher, the priest, whose lips should preserve knowledge; demand of your pastor, as the disciples of Christ here.—*Dean Boys.*

Ver. 11. “*The mystery of the kingdom of God.*”—Religious knowledge, and especially that Christian and saving knowledge which the gospel brought to light, is what our Lord means by “the mystery of the kingdom of God.” A “mystery” is something dark and incomprehensible; which may happen in two ways—either through the want of a clear revelation, or through the natural and incurable imperfection of our faculties. “The kingdom” contains mysteries of both kinds: some sublime secrets which are altogether too high for us, which no revelation could impart to us, and which are therefore properly said to “belong unto the Lord our God”; others, again, which in former ages were not made known unto the sons of men, as they are now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets, and through them to mankind in general, by the Spirit. In the latter there is no mystery as soon as the revelation is made, no difficulty which may not be removed by the instructions and explanations of a discreet, patient, and condescending teacher. Such a teacher was our Blessed Lord. He had to teach things, not unintelligible in their nature, but yet strange and hard sayings to His poor, ignorant, carnal-minded hearers; such as required to be helped out by comparisons and illustrations from

things which they did understand. He did not attempt to show to such persons what the kingdom of God was, but only what it was like; that by the help of these patterns and representations of things in the heavens He might at last lead up their minds to the heavenly things themselves.

Ver. 14. *The emblem of seed for God's Word* needs no explanation. The tiny, living nucleus of force, which is thrown broadcast, and must sink underground in order to grow, which does grow, and comes to light again in a form which fills the whole field where it is sown, and nourishes life as well as supplies material for another sowing, is the truest symbol of the truth in its working on the spirit.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*Sowing broadcast* is the only right husbandry in Christ's field with Christ's seed. "Thou canst not tell which shall prosper, whether this or that." The character of the soil is not irrevocably fixed; but the trodden path may be broken up to softness, and the stony heart changed, and the soul filled with cares and lusts be cleared, and any soil may become good ground.—*Ibid.*

*The seed must be genuine*: wheat, not bastard wheat; the wheat that makes bread and sustains life—the seed of the Word of God. Not all seed sown in Sunday schools, just as not all seed scattered from Christian pulpits, is unadulterated truth of God. While there must always be the human element in the teaching of the inspired Word, it must not be all the human element, which it is too often found to be, whereby much of the teaching given is, for all higher and Divine purposes, not bread, but sawdust.—*Bishop Thorold.*

*Twofold sowing.*—According to Jewish authorities there was twofold sowing, as the seed was either cast by the hand or by means of cattle. In the latter case a sack with holes was filled with corn, and laid on the back of the animal, so that, as it moved onwards, the seed was thickly scattered. Thus it might well be that it would fall indiscriminately on beaten roadway, or

on stony places but thinly covered with soil, or where the thorns had not been cleared away, or undergrowth from this thorn hedge crept into the field, as well as on good ground.—*A. Eder-sheim, D.D.*

*The sowing of the seed of goodness*, even among the rank growths of evil, will do in the spiritual world what the growth of the wild flowers of England is doing at this moment among the rank vegetation of New Zealand, and what the fire and hoe of the settler have failed to do. We are told that the common clover of our fields, tender as it looks, is actually rooting out the formidable New Zealand flax, with its fibrous leaves and strong woody roots. By the law of natural selection, as it were, in the spiritual world, the stronger growth of heaven will extirpate the feebler growth of earth.—*H. Macmillan, D.D.*

Ver. 15. *By the wayside.*—These are they who, when the Baptist came with austere severity, said he was mad; and when Christ conversed and taught with mild condescension, said He was a drunkard, a glutton, and a keeper of bad company. They hated the doctrines, and so found fault with the teachers. Such are those who have entered betimes, and continued long, in the service of the devil; who are slaves to vices and bad habits; who have extinguished all reason, reflexion, and natural conscience, and whom no ordinary methods can reclaim. The Word is preached to them, and they trample it underfoot, and ridicule those who offer them good advice. They lie out of the reach of persuasion and instruction, and nothing short of some grievous calamity can rouse them. But from their deplorable condition others may take due warning, lest, by departing from their duty and neglecting a timely reformation, they should, through the deceitfulness of sin, arrive at such a hardened state. And this seems to be the only use these incorrigible offenders serve in this world: they stand forth, not as marks and friendly lights to guide



and direct the passenger, but as signals of danger and death to be avoided.—*J. Jortin, D.D.*

*The devil's activity.*—"Wherever there is a preacher in the pulpit, there is a devil in the pew," to carry off the good seed if it be neglected.

*Satan hinders men* in sundry ways from profiting by the Word. 1. By keeping them from hearing it, stirring up occasions of worldly business or some other impediments on the Lord's Day to keep them away from church. 2. By keeping them from attending to it when they do hear it. 3. By blinding their minds, that they may not understand it. 4. By labouring to hold them in infidelity, that they may not believe and apply the Word to themselves. 5. By using means to thrust the Word heard out of their minds, that they may not remember it. 6. By keeping them from yielding obedience to the Word.—*G. Petter.*

Vers. 16, 17. *No root.*—These are persons who have conscience, reason, and reflexion; who can discern the amiable and profitable nature of religion, and the folly and danger of vice; who can sometimes give attention to the Word of God, approve it as right and fit, speak and think honourably of it, and of those who practise it, and even entertain purposes of acting suitably to it: but they have no steadiness, resolution, and perseverance; and so are not proof against trials and temptations. They are such as are described in Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. Moral precepts and religious arguments appear fair and lovely in idea, but are found grievous in practice and execution; and the paths of righteousness, which make a fine landscape in description, are rough, steep, and tedious to ascend. Such is the effect of religion upon those who have some taste and natural discernment, but no steady love of goodness.—*J. Jortin, D.D.*

*Many mistake feeling for faith,* admiration of Christ for attachment to Him, the appreciation of the beauty of holiness for the use and practice of

it, the power of emotion for depth of piety. Such are as quickly offended as they are impressed.

*Quick maturity* means brief life and speedy decay. "*Gladness*," although certainly a result of true conversion, is not the immediate result, but sorrow for sin and repentance in dust and ashes.

*A forgotten truth.*—Much more of true religion consists in deep humility, brokenness of heart, and an abasing sense of barrenness, and want of grace, and holiness, than most who are called Christians imagine; especially those who have been esteemed the converts of the late day, many of whom seem to know of no other religion but elevated joys and affections, arising only from some flights of imagination, or some suggestion made to their mind of Christ's being theirs, God's loving them, and the like (John v. 35; Mark vi. 20; Luke iv. 23, 29).—*D. Brainerd.*

*Revival converts.*—The short and pathetic history of some who are called revival converts. They are charmed, but not changed; much excited, but not truly converted. Their root is in the crowd, the fine music, the lively stir, the hearty companionships of the gospel meeting. The Moravians every Sabbath offer up this prayer: "From light-minded swarming deliver us, good God."

Vers. 18, 19, *The Word choked.*—To this class of people religion is presented and propounded; and they assent to it and receive it, and call themselves Christians; but many things arise between them and their duty, many avocations and impediments which prevent the Word from having a due effect upon their hearts. 1. "The cares of this world," when admitted and nourished and encouraged, seize upon the whole man, and so fill the head and occupy the hours that the attention is entirely fixed on worldly affairs, and no leisure is allowed for spiritual concerns. And as no person can bear the toil and fatigue of being

always contriving, projecting, labouring, plodding, and some amusement must intervene, the times for recreation are, for such persons, the times when other Christians are attending the public worship of God, or meditating on things sacred and serious at home. Thus religious considerations are totally banished; and the man may be said to be dead to God and Christ, and alive only to the world. 2. "The deceitfulness of riches" has the same bad effect. When the love of wealth is predominant and engrosses the affections, it produces an eagerness to acquire it; a proud trust and confidence in it; a settled resolution to preserve and increase it by any methods, and in defiance of honesty and humanity; and an esteem or contempt of other persons, according as they are rich or poor: and then mammon alone is worshipped, and the love of God is expelled from the heart. 3. "The lusts of other things"—viz. desires of magnificence and splendour, of flattery and popular applause, of power and pre-eminence, and, in a word, immoderate affections for anything that is temporal and transitory.—*J. Jortin, D.D.*

*Disheartening influences.*—The ridicule of companions, the polite surprise or cold sneer of former friends at their earnestness, the tyranny of fashion, the seductions of pleasure, the force of habit and inclination, unexpected sorrows and difficulties, which would drive an earnest spirit nearer to God, dishearten those whose religion is founded on emotion rather than on principle.

Ver. 20. *Ground which disappointeth not the sower*, and bringeth forth fruit in its season, is naturally good, and is improved by culture. The heart of every well-disposed person is such. God has given to all of us abilities, and power to exert them;

He has also given to us Christians superadded His revealed will in the gospel; and what aid is necessary He is ever ready to bestow: but a man must put forth his own strength, and seek out and work out his own salvation. The persons, therefore, here described act like rational creatures; they have a love of knowledge and goodness, and a desire to make improvements in both. Thence they are disposed to inquire into themselves and their duty; and opportunities for this are never wanting: morality and revealed religion lie within their reach, and they may read or hear what God requires from them. "They hear the Word, and receive it"; they lay it to heart, and call it to mind; they meditate upon the benefits arising from it, the danger of neglecting it, the reasonable and lovable nature of it, the dangers, inconveniences, and temptations which may arise and assault them, the proper methods of shunning or resisting them, and the wisdom of preferring eternal life to all other considerations.—*J. Jortin, D.D.*

*Varying yields.*—Every one has observed the difference between those who may be called good Christians, in the matter of their good works—how some seem to produce twice or thrice the fruit that others do. Some are, compared with others, three times more careful in all the trifling matters which make up so much of life; three times more self-denying, three times more liberal, three times more humble, subdued, and thankful. Does not the Lord recognise this difference in the parable of the pounds, when the nobleman, in leaving, gives a pound to each of his servants; and one servant makes it ten pounds, and another five; and he commends both, but gives to the more industrious worker twice the reward?—*M. F. Sadler.*

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21—25.

(PARALLEL: LUKE viii. 16-18.)

Ver. 22. *The manifestation of hidden things.*—This is a proverbial saying, applied in various senses, according to the occasion. Before treating it in a general way, we may glance at it in connexion with the particular occasions on which we find it employed in Scripture. 1. Matt. x. 26. Our Lord is there warning His apostles of the enmity and persecution which they must expect to encounter in the discharge of their duty. "My doctrine," He seems to say, "must by all means, and in spite of all attempts to suppress it, be proclaimed abroad. There is nothing now hid which shall not be revealed; nor has there anything passed in secret between us which shall not be generally made known. Fear not, therefore, but proceed to execute the task assigned you, not by the method of private communication, which is suited only to the instruction of a few confidential disciples, but in whatever way may best serve to spread the gospel abroad." 2. Luke xii. 2. A warning against dissimulation. There will come a day when all hypocrisy will be laid bare, and every man will appear in his true character. 3. The text. As a candle is meant to be elevated on a candlestick, so Christians should not lead a life of seclusion and retirement, but rather let their light shine before men.

I. Perhaps the first case which occurs to one, on hearing this saying, is that of **great and atrocious crimes, of which the perpetrators are unknown**; acts of violence or wanton mischief, committed under cover of night or remote from observation. A short time usually brings to light the deed; but the author and the circumstances remain a mystery. Such is the case of "an uncertain murder," for which the Mosaic Law made a remarkable provision (Deut. xxi. 1-9). Even in this world it is wonderful how things come to light, often with the result of bringing the guilt home to the right door. But for the complete fulfilment of the text we must wait till the Day of Judgment, when no darkness will hide the evil-doer, and there will be no need of pursuers to track him to his hiding-place; "his own iniquities," etc. (Prov. v. 22). Then it will be useless for one of the party to come forward and betray his accomplices; for whatsoever the conspirators of mischief "have spoken in darkness," etc. (Luke xii. 3). A necessary consequence of the exposure of guilt will be the manifestation of innocence. Now, in our ignorance of the real offender, suspicions fall upon many innocent persons, who, if they cannot perfectly clear themselves, continue under a cloud all their lives. This is a sore trial; but the Day of Judgment will set it right. See Isa. lviii. 8; Ps. xxxvii. 6.

II. Another great heap of hidden things, one day to be revealed, are **the thoughts of men's hearts, and the secret springs of their actions**. At present everything connected with the inner working of the mind is a mystery. Of all covered things none is so close and impenetrable as the heart of man (Jer. xvii. 9). But, happily, "all things are naked," etc. (Heb. iv. 13). God is able to unlock the doors of this cabinet, and expose all the secret drawers, recesses, and hiding-places contained in it. And when we see the multifarious furniture of a single heart—thoughts, desires, motives, passions, and affections—ransacked and sifted before the eyes of the universe, we shall perceive an additional propriety in the text. What a disclosure! Who could have imagined that those who preserved so amiable and sanctified an exterior should in their hearts be proud, covetous, sensual, devilish? But where gross hypocrisy is not chargeable, yet what a miserable figure will the very best and purest exertions of human virtue make, when manifested, with all their blemishes, in the searching light of God's



countenance! Which of us will then appear to have "walked before Him and been perfect"? to have loved Him "with all our heart," etc.? to have set up no idols, no rebellious wills, no carnal affections?

Ver. 24. *How to hear sermons.*—"Take heed what ye hear" really means "Take heed *how* ye hear," in what spirit ye hear, with what attention, with what profit, as appears from the words which follow.

**I. Ways in which men bring upon themselves spiritual hurt and loss by their manner of hearing God's Word.**—1. If they hear without attention or feeling or desire, then they become so used to the words by hearing them often, they so harden their hearts by their careless, godless practice, that they become like the hard-beaten road from which the devil catches away the seed directly it has fallen. They have this of not attending, that they cannot attend; of closing their ears, that they lose the power of hearing even when they would listen; and often they go down to the grave deaf to God's warnings, deaf to the sound of preacher or angel or the voice of Christ, to be awakened from that deafness by the voice of the archangel, and by the trump of God calling to judgment. 2. Men hear and pay attention; they are moved by what is said or by what they read: but they rise up and forget; or they begin to act and leave off with failing zeal and sinking interest; or their sins or the world choke the seed, and it becometh unfruitful. 3. God withdraws His Spirit from those who neglect His grace; and without that Spirit no man can draw near to Him.

**II. The great danger of not heeding how we hear in respect to sermons.**—1. It will avail a man nothing to listen in a judging, criticising spirit. On the contrary, it will make the service an exercise of pride to him instead of humility: he will learn nothing, because he has not the spirit of a learner, but the feeling of a teacher, a judge, and a superior. 2. It will serve a man nothing if he listens to a sermon without applying it to *himself*. 3. If any person delights in the manner or words of a sermon, or in the preacher of it, rather than in the matter, the thing preached will profit him nothing. Such an one loses the kernel in admiring the shell. 4. A man who talks much about a sermon after it is over is not one most likely to profit by it. It has been well said that the best sermon is that which sends a congregation away not talking, but thinking. Those who feel most speak least. St. Augustine went to preach to some barbarous people in order to persuade them to abandon a cruel custom to which they were used. "I preached mightily," he says, "to the best of my power to pluck out so cruel and unchristian a custom from their hearts and minds, and to banish it by my exhorting. I did not think, however, that I had accomplished anything when I heard them applauding, but when I saw them weeping. For they shewed by their applause that they were instructed and pleased, but by their tears that they were turned." 5. Many people think that they require a sermon several times a week to keep them in the right way, and to fill them with heavenly thoughts. They are mistaken; they require no more preaching than they can hear upon the Lord's Day, except at particular seasons and for particular instruction. But what they do require is *thought*. It is want of thought that makes sermons useless, and afflictions useless, and warnings useless.—*W. E. Heygate.*

Ver. 25. *How progress is possible.*—The law laid down is this: that when we use powers and faculties, we gain more power and more faculty; that when we neglect to use them, they decrease, and at last perish. Such is the case with bodily organs, but such is still more the case with mental organs. Practice makes perfect, it is said. But notice this: it is not undirected practice, or the

random use of any power, but it is the carefully arranged practice which improves it. In other words, it is practice directed *towards an end*. Robert Houdon, the celebrated French juggler, tells us how he acquired one element of his power, an extreme quickness and accuracy of observation. His father took him through one of the boulevards of Paris, crowded with people, and led him slowly past a shop window, in which were exhibited a great multitude of different articles, and then made him tell how many he had been able to notice and recollect. This practice so strengthened and quickened the perceptive powers, that at last he became able to recollect every article in a large shop window by only walking past it a single time. The more he exercised the faculty, the easier it became. The more he had of this quickness of observation, the more was given to him. In the same way acrobats and gymnasts, by careful and systematic training, develop herculean strength of limb and power of equipoise. As one improves any power by careful training, he gets more. He has much, and more is given him. But if we neglect to exercise our powers, they degenerate, and at last disappear. The fishes in the Mammoth Cave have lost their eyes by not using them in that Egyptian darkness. So if men do not employ any power, they at last become incapable of using it. The gland which does not secrete diminishes in bulk; the nerve that does not transmit impressions wastes away; the muscle which does not contract withers. The intellectual and moral organs, like the physical, are liable to atrophy, from disuse. If a person does not take pains to observe, and to remember what he observes, the power of seeing and remembering gradually decays. He who does not think seriously on anything will become frivolous, and not be able to apply his mind at all. To him who hath knowledge more shall be given, and he shall have abundance. Knowledge in the mind is such a vital and vitalising power, that it makes the intellect active to see, to learn, to remember. Whoever travels with an empty, untaught mind comes back nearly as ignorant as he went; but the geologist, the artist, the man who has read geography and history, or who knows well any industry or manufacture or art, is able to see something new wherever he goes. Just as the merchant must send out some freight in his vessel in order to bring back a cargo, the traveller must take some knowledge with him abroad if he wishes to bring any with him home. We have heard of persons who have stayed in their house and avoided society until it became impossible for them to leave their home or the room. We owe something to society; we all can be of use to others by some kindly, cheerful companionship; but these people have buried their talent in the earth, until at last it is taken from them. Solitary confinement, when inflicted as a punishment, is considered a very severe one; but these persons inflict it on themselves—living for years alone, and at last unable to go out, even if they wish to do so. So people who do not give lose at last the power of giving. Let us never forget the epitaph on a tombstone, which teaches the true law on this subject: "What I spent, I had; what I kept, I lost; what I gave, I have still." So likewise those who do not care to see the truth lose at last the power of seeing it. I have known lawyers to whom justice and truth were supreme—honourable, high-minded men, who never condescended to any low cunning, but only used those arguments to convince others which were convincing to themselves. Such men, as they grow older, grow wiser, stronger, greater. They love truth, and truth is given to them, and they have abundance. But we have known others, members of this same grand profession, whose only object was to win their cause, and that in any way. They said, not what they believed true, but what they thought they might make *seem* true to others. Their object was, not to convince; but to deceive, to confuse, to bewilder, to mislead, to win their cause by appeals to prejudice, to ignorance, to passion. And so at last they confuse their

own sense, and lose the power of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, right and wrong. They have buried their talent in the earth, and it is taken from them. We may state the law thus: "Any habitual course of conduct changes voluntary actions into automatic or involuntary actions." This can be illustrated by the physical constitution of man. Some of our bodily acts are voluntary, some involuntary; some, partly one and partly the other. The heart beats seventy or eighty times a minute all our life long, without any will of ours. The lungs, in the same way, perpetually inhale and exhale breath, whether we intend it or not; and if the lungs should suspend their action, we should die. But we can exercise a *little* volition over the action of the lungs; we can breathe voluntarily, taking long breaths. Thus the action of the lungs is partly automatic and partly voluntary, while the mechanical action of the heart is wholly automatic, and the chemical action of the digestive organs is the same. But some acts, voluntary at first, become, by habit, automatic. A child beginning to walk takes every single step by a separate act of will; beginning to read, he looks at every single letter. After a while he walks and reads by a habit, which has become involuntary. So also it is with man's moral and spiritual nature. By practice he forms habits, and habitual action is automatic action, requiring no exercise of will except at the beginning of the series of acts. The law of association does the rest. So to him who hath shall be given. As voluntary acts are transformed into automatic, the will is set free to devote itself to higher efforts and larger attainments. If it were not for some such law of accumulation as this, the work of life would have to be begun for ever anew. Formation of character would be impossible. We should be incapable of progress, our whole strength being always employed in battling with our first enemies, learning evermore anew our earliest lessons. But, by our present constitution, he who has taken one step can take another, and life may become a perpetual advance from good to better. This is the one and sufficient reward of all virtue, the one sufficient punishment of all wrongdoing, that right actions and wrong actions gradually harden into character. The reward of the good man is, that having chosen truth and pursued it, it becomes at last a part of his own nature, a happy companion of all his life. The condemnation of the bad man is, that when light has come into the world he has chosen darkness, and so the light within him becomes darkness. Do not envy the bad man's triumphs and worldly successes. Every one of them is a rivet fastening him to evil, making it more difficult for him to return to good, making it impossible but for the redeeming power of God, which has become incarnate in Christ, in order to seek and save the lost. The highest graces of all—faith, hope, and love—obey the same law. By trusting in God when we hardly see Him at all, we come at last to realise, as by another sense, His Divine presence in all things. Faith in God, at first an effort, at last becomes automatic and instinctive. Thus, too, faith in immortality solidifies into an instinct. As we live from and for infinite, Divine, eternal realities, these become a part of our knowledge. Socrates did not convince himself of his immortality much by his arguments. But by spending a long life in intimate converse with the highest truths and noblest ends, he at last reached the point where he could not help believing in immortality. The moral of all this is evident. Every man, every woman, every child, has some talent, some power, some opportunity, of getting good and doing good. Each day offers us some occasion of using this talent. As we use it, it gradually increases, improves, becomes native to the character. As we neglect it, it dwindles, withers, and disappears. This is the stern but benign law by which we live. This makes character real and enduring; this makes progress possible; this turns men into angels and virtue into goodness.—*J. F. Clarke.*



## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 21, 22. *Christian life*.—I. **As a revelation**.—1. It is to be luminous. 2. It is to be properly placed in the midst of society. The gospel is a great revealing power. In all truth there is power of exposure and judgment; how much more in the highest truth of all!

II. **As a responsibility**.—1. Stewardship in *doctrine*. 2. Stewardship in *action*.

III. **As a law**.—1. Usefulness is productiveness. 2. Indolence is ruin. The kingdom of Christ is thus shewn to be founded on law. Man never becomes more than a subject: Christ never less than a king.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Ver. 21. *Usefulness*.—The duty which no one can disclaim, the test which no one may evade, and the praise which no one will despise are all included in the homely word “usefulness.”

I. **The inevitableness of usefulness** for every one who is in spirit, as well as profession, a true disciple of Christ. The use of light, as well as its function, is to shine. So a Christian is a Christian, not merely for the personal object of his individual salvation, but that he may glorify God in saving others. True, he must divest himself of self-consciousness. Also, he must be constantly on his guard against religious priggishness. But he is to shine as a light in the world, if he would not be missing one of the chief ends of his salvation.

II. **The scope of a Christian's usefulness** is very wide. “Before men,” Christ said, His disciples were to make their light shine. But there are several spheres of usefulness, in their order of importance and necessity, more or less open to us all. 1. Wherever else we may or may not be useful, let us, above all things, endeavour to be useful at home. Our first duties are with those who are nearest and dearest to us. 2. In society we can be very useful, if we are only earnestly bent

on it, and cultivate tact, modesty, and self-effacement.

III. **The method of usefulness**.—1. All our usefulness, whatever it may be, must depend on our character. Christ in the heart must precede Christ on the lips. 2. The discharge of our daily duty will immensely affect our influence with others. 3. Friendship gives another scope for usefulness. 4. For each one, if he cares to trust it and to use it, Christ offers some special service, according to capacity, age, and gift.—*Bishop Thorold.*

*Christ's methods in revelation*.—He is the person that lights the candle or the lamp; and in explanation of His teaching by parables He says in effect: “Do not think that I would be so foolish as to defeat and counterwork My own purpose, by bringing any arbitrary or needless obscurities into My teaching. I do not light My lamp of revelation, and then put it away under a bushel of dark sayings, which might have been made light and clear.” But the parable, which is a veiling of the light—which is, if not a putting it under a bushel, at least putting a bit of coloured glass between you and it—the parable is given for the distinct purpose, not that the light that streams through it may be hidden, but that the light may be manifested. If there is any darkness, be sure that it is darkness which is intended to help the spread of the light. And if there be obscurities, they are meant, by stimulating thought to search, by arresting attention, and by a hundred other effects on us to whom the revelation comes, to make us more vigorous in our pursuit after the truth; and on God's side are adopted, not in order that He may ensnare us and give Himself excuses for punishing, but that He may temper the light to the weak eye, and so make it capable of becoming strong enough to bear more light.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*The guiding light.*—What does a man light a candle for? That it may give light. What has God given me my conscience and my power of spiritual perception for, but in order that it may be the guiding light of my whole nature, not that it may be put under a bushel or under a bed? The light which is in us falls under the same laws as the light without us in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Nay, more, the light which is in the Christian soul is Christ. For it is the conscience illuminated by His indwelling, and the spirit made capable of perceiving the truth because it possesses Christ within, of which He is here speaking. And what He says is this: "I kindled the light in your heart and mind and conscience, not that it might be quenched and darkened, but that it might be your guiding star and perpetual inspiration." And you falsify and contradict the very purpose for which Christ has come to you, unless you let the light of His will burning in your will, and the light of His truth flaming in your understanding, and the light of His righteousness illuminating your conscience, be your supreme and sovereign guides.—*Ibid.*

*Hidden lights.*—Some Christian men darken and obscure the light of Christ within them by their carefulness about earthly necessities, possessions, and treasures, which are represented by the bushel of commerce; and some of them do the same thing by sheer slothfulness and indifference in the religious life, which are represented by the bed on which men stretch themselves at ease for sleep.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 22. *The day of manifestation.*—Though now it is often hard or impossible to distinguish between those in whom the good seed is springing up freely and healthfully, and those in whom its growth is checked and stunted, or trodden out; yet remember a time is coming when all shall be made plain and manifest, when man's responsibility shall be fully acknowledged, and his shortcomings shall be

fearfully avenged. Then shall the reckoning be. Then shall it be clearly seen and brought to light how the good seed has been plenteously and continually sown in many a heart, and scarcely sown before lost for ever, how opportunities and calls have been neglected, graces and mercies slighted, warnings and examples lightly put aside; in a word, the man's struggle against grace through a whole lifetime shall be laid bare, step by step, and feature by feature, then, when the time of grace shall be no more.—*Dean Butler.*

Ver. 24. "*Take heed what ye hear.*"—Never was this warning more needed than now. Men think themselves free to follow any teacher, especially if he be eloquent, to read any book, if only it be in demand, and to discuss any theory, provided it be fashionable, while perfectly well aware that they are neither earnest inquirers after truth, nor qualified champions against its assailants. For what, then, do they read and hear? For the pleasure of a rounded phrase, or to augment the prattle of conceited ignorance in a drawing-room. Do we wonder when these players with edged tools injure themselves, and become perverts or agnostics? A rash and uninstructed exposure of our intellects to evil influences is meting to God with an unjust measure, as really as a wilful plunge into any other temptation, since we are bidden to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the spirit as well as of the flesh.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*Unprofitable hearers.*—Some can be content to hear all pleasant things, as the promises and mercies of God; but judgments and reproofs, threats and checks, these they cannot brook; like unto those who, in medicine, care only for a pleasant smell or appearance in the remedy, as pills rolled in gold, but have no regard for the efficacy of the physic. Some can willingly hear that which concerns other men and their sins, their lives and manners, but nothing touching themselves or their

own sins; as men can willingly abide to hear of other men's deaths, but cannot abide to think of their own.—*R. Stock.*

"*With what measure ye mete.*"—His hearers would at once understand the allusion. When grain is brought in quantities, it is brought in bags which are always measured again by a person whose trade it is to do this. Squatting cross-legged on the ground, he fills the grain with his hands into a "tinneh," which he shakes when it is full, to make the contents solid. He then refills it, twists it round scientifically, and makes a second settling of the grain, afterwards refilling it. He then presses down the whole with his hands, and at last, when he cannot make it hold more, raises as high a cone as possible on the top; only this being thought "good measure."—*C. Geikie, D.D.*

*The law of compensation.*—At present you have, as men say, the law in your own hands. You can do nearly as you will. There is no compulsion laid upon you. You can measure out to God what measure you will. If you choose to profit, to let His words sink into your hearts, to bring forth fruit to His glory, it is, through His grace, in your power to do so. Under the influence of that life-giving Word the rocky soil may become deep, rich, staple; the roadside shall no more be trodden; the thorns shall be rooted out. Not even deep sin can hinder it. "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose: it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing." Such is its marvellous efficacy within the heart that gives itself to its control, that the publican becomes an apostle, the shameless sinner a deeply-loving penitent. Therefore *you* are *now* the meters. You may, as you will, refuse or accept, *i.e.* develop or utterly stifle the results of the heavenly sowing. Only remember, that as you deal now with God, in this measure will *you* be dealt with hereafter.—*Dean Butler.*

*The nature of Christ's teaching* is such as that, if a man, with sharpened ear

and attentive spirit, listens and takes into his heart what he does understand, and lives thereby, the amount of what he understands is sure to grow, and endless progress in the apprehension of the light that lives in the thickest apparent darkness will be his. Just as when we step out of a gaudily lighted room, and look up into the depths of the heavens above us, all seems obscured. But, as we gaze, the focus of the eye changes, and we see sparkling points which we shall one day know to be magnificent suns in the far-off vault, which at first seemed unrelieved darkness. So, because the lamp is not hid under the bushel, take heed what you hear, and recognise in the very form of the revelation of God's love and will in Jesus Christ a provision for the certain progress in knowledge and perception of every faithful, listening soul, and a provision for the as certain darkening into unrelieved blackness and midnight obscurity of the glimmering light neglected.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 25. *Christian attainment.*—According to the interest, the attention, the practical purpose, the sympathy with truth which you bring to the hearing will be the gifts which your Teacher will bestow, and the accessions which you will carry away; and every such accession will be itself a foundation for higher attainment, for "he that hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." What importance is thus added to every measure of Christian attainment! It is no longer to be estimated by itself, but in relation to ulterior progress, as a qualification for the further steps by which we may "grow up into Him in all things who is our Head, even Christ." Valuable and blessed as every such attainment is in itself, that value and blessedness will be largely increased by what we may call the tendencies and potentialities which belong to it, and which show themselves as new opportunities arise. A man has a certain interest in the



things of God: it is well; but we are chiefly thankful for it because it will dispose him to hear, to inquire, to consider, and so to profit by the teaching which the providence of God may present to him. He has certain convictions: we rejoice, but most because these convictions decide him to break with things that were hurtful, and to throw himself among things that are profitable to his salvation, taking his place among those who would learn of the heavenly wisdom, "watching daily at her gates, waiting at the posts of her doors." He has a certain knowledge of Divine truth, and what he knows will interpret to him what he knows not, enabling him, when he hears a higher teaching, to apprehend and appreciate instructions which, to those less advanced, are "done in parables." He has a certain experience in the spiritual life, and that experience qualifies him to pass with increasing profit through subsequent dispensations which might else have perplexed or offended or crushed him. Till the time shall come which will enlighten the obscure histories of human life, none can say to what a degree this system of sequence is maintained and administered in the kingdom of God. Enough of it is declared, and enough is visible, to

solemnise our view of passing things, and to make us feel how neglect or refusal of what is offered us at one period may propagate its fatal influence through successive stages of spiritual loss, or how a firm hold laid upon some gift of grace may prove to have put us in possession of ever-accumulating treasures.—*J. D. Burns.*

The earnest find that they grow; the triflers find that their powers rust and fade.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

God's benefits come not alone, but one is the pledge of another. The grant of a mite is the assignment of a talent. A drop of dew from heaven is a prognostic of a gracious shower, of a flood, which nothing can draw dry, but ingratitude (James i. 5, iv. 6).—*A. Farindon, D.D.*

*God's dealings.*—This verse represents God's dealings in a very encouraging light. Many who wish to be true Christians despair of ever reaching such a lofty attainment; the distance seems too great, the path too difficult. Let them remember, for their comfort, that, no matter how far, it is only one step at a time, and, no matter how difficult, "to him that hath" the will "shall be given" the power; he shall go from strength to strength, and from grace to grace, till before the God of gods he appears in Zion.

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 26—29.

*The parable of the growing corn.*—It is remarkable that St. Mark alone should report this parable, and it is more than remarkable because it is the only parable which he alone has reported. It is very brief, has no interpretation attached to it, and looks at first sight not unlike some of the other parables. Yet it appears to me to supply an essential link in the chain of parabolic teaching. The side or aspect of the kingdom of God to which it refers is one which could not be passed over. If I understand it aright, it forms a needful companion or counterpart to the parable of the tares (Matt. xiii. 24-30). Each of them lays stress upon a different part of the common process of husbandry. In the one the end operations of sowing and reaping, into which enters the personal action of the Son of Man, are made conspicuous and insisted on at length, while the intervening months of growth are referred to only to add that then the crop must be "let alone." In the other the contrary occurs. The initial and terminal operations of the husbandman constitute no more than a frame to the picture. They are named merely to shew us the better how the farmer did nothing for the remainder of the time; while the process described at length is

the slow, gradual growth and ripening of the plants under the spontaneous action of the fruit-bearing earth. Thus the two parables are seen to complete each other. The one in Matthew brings out how voluntary extra-natural agents act upon the kingdom of Christ from above or from beneath, but chiefly at the beginning and the end of its career. This one in Mark brings out the natural agencies whose unhindered action determines the advance of the kingdom from its beginning to its end. Let us now examine our parable in detail. Its central words form a key to the whole: "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself." In other words, what is here taught is not the vitality of the seed, nor the activity of the two sowers, but the productiveness of the soil. Only commit a seed to the earth, and "the earth will bring forth fruit of herself." The growth of a wheat-field is a long and tedious process. Grain has its own laws, according to which it must germinate and shoot: you cannot make it grow otherwise than God appoints. It has its successive stages through which it is bound to pass: you cannot have an ear before its stalk is tall. It lies exposed to atmospheric influences, both bad and good: you cannot, with all your husbandry, hinder the wind from causing it to strike deeper root, or the frost from nipping its too tender shoots. In fact, the farmer can do very little in the matter. Only the great earth, stored by God with the chemical conditions of fruitfulness, and lying ever open by day and night to God's atmospheric influences—to rain and dew, to sun and wind, to frost and electricity—only this wonderful earth carries on the process. In spite of so much that appears to war against the plant, damping the farmer's hope, somehow the earth never fails after all to "bring forth fruit of herself." In all this may be discerned, I think, three leading features of resemblance to the progress of Christ's kingdom in the world.

**I. The kingdom of Christ has had to pass through those stages of imperfect growth which are common to other systems existing in human society.**—It need hardly be said that the Church did not burst upon the world a finished organisation—perfect when it was first set up. Our Lord did no more than sow a few men into Palestine society with a few religious truths in their hearts. These truths, being alive with a Divine force, made the men live. Life proved contagious, and spread. It sought expression through common forms, and the multitude became a community—a Church. It has been really growing on ever since. There has been progress. Christendom has not passed through so many changes in vain. Was it no progress when the seed Christ scattered in the early sowing-day struck its roots through the old dying Greco-Roman world, and out of it drew whatever it could find of nutriment in its philosophy, its law, or its literature? That fat soil of classic civilisation was the prepared ground in which, beneath the hot sun of ten persecutions, Christianity was designed to grow deep-rooted and full-bladed. Was it no further progress when out of this rich growth a new world shot up, and through the Middle Ages modern Europe was formed like a tall flowering stalk held aloft upon the base of the older world? Has there been no progress since then? The religion of the Anglo-Saxon race is the most promising ear on the Church Catholic, and it has been rapidly filling for the last three centuries. It has drunk in contributions from every quarter: from the growth of municipal and national freedom; from the resuscitation of letters; from the discovery of America and India; from modern widening of knowledge and stimulation of the inventive arts. Perhaps we are standing already on the border of the world's ripening age—if not actually within it. Already we see enough to surmise that by-and-by the kingdom will have run its course and the harvest of the earth be ripe. These two will synchronise. This world cannot last a day longer nor end a day sooner than the close of the Church's development. "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately He putteth in the sickle."

II. Throughout all its stages the Christian community is affected by every secular influence at work beside it, just as anything else would be.—What is this but to say that “the field is the world”? Human society as it exists in the world forms the soil into which Christianity has been cast. The current modes of thought form the atmosphere it has to breathe. The forces which in each land or age have told on ordinary history have told upon the Church. At one time it has been crushed by violence, and at another fanned to slumber in the lap of luxury. False philosophies have tainted its doctrine, and lax manners affected its discipline. The passion or the pride that inflames rival parties has often rent its unity; often, too, have political alliances essayed to cement the fragments. It has borrowed much from other forces in social history, as well as lent much to others. Rude in rude ages; learned among the learned; it has become all things to all men. Yet in this common soil and atmosphere of earth the kingdom of Christ has, on the whole, thriven. Propagated by human hands, it has drunk of the rain of heaven. Wealth has served its ends, and literature fought its battles, and adventure run its errands. Civilisation has organised its strength, and commerce pioneered its way. Whatever good gifts God gave to earth have in some measure aided the advance of His kingdom; and the history of the nations has been at the same time in great part the history of Christianity. Thus on the whole the kingdom grows. It may be hard to see how at any given moment. Stand beside a field of springing corn on a blustery March morning; you fail to see how such tender sprouts are to be brought nearer harvest by the blasts that beat them. So at few moments of the Church’s progress could the saints of the day trace the tendency of all the forces at work upon the cause of Christ. Yet let the short-sighted and faint-hearted Christian take courage. It is a fruitful earth after all. As surely as the weeks of spring and summer do on the whole ripen our fields, so surely will all the ages contribute to fill the garner of heaven.

III. The parable implies not merely that natural forces act on the kingdom of Christ, but that they are allowed to act themselves out freely without personal or supernatural interference on the part of the Great Husbandman. When it is said, “The kingdom is as if a man . . . should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how,” it is just the ordinary life of the farmer as he goes about his other tasks which is described. The point is that that ordinary life of the farmer between sowing and reaping is, speaking roughly, one of entire cessation from all direct action upon the field. Sowing and reaping are human interferences with the processes of nature. As compared with the self-sown wilderness, where each seed is allowed to shell itself out upon the untilled ground, a field is an artificial thing. Now these two artificial interferences of man symbolise the supernatural acts of God which mark the opening and the close of the Christian history. He did interfere with the sterility of the world to clear a space and sow a new crop of spiritual men and women. The advent of Christ with all that He accomplished personally or through His messengers to found His Church constituted one stupendous miracle. Supernatural interposition of God to work in the human field is the true description of the life of Christ. What wonder if accessory miracles hung about His steps and lingered round the feet of His immediate ministers? By such signs and portents was he who had long ruled in open day with his possessions and sorceries and oracles driven to sow mimic seed secretly by night. But when that first great operation of the Sower from heaven was ended miracle ceased. The higher and the lower agents alike retired for a long while behind the screen of natural instrumentality. The field of Christian history was left to the sun and the wind and the rain. Henceforth—till we near the end, when again Divine hands interpose everything in the development



of the faith progresses in obedience to those orderly laws which regulate the progress of truth from mind to mind or from age to age. It may be said, "How can we speak of the Lord Jesus as quitting charge or activity within His field? Nay, as even asleep and ignorant how it grows? Is it not He who is always at work within every Christian heart, sustaining by His Spirit the life of His saints, and guiding to His own issues the destinies of His Church?" Unquestionably. Only He does so very much as He causes corn to grow in the field. He is as full of care and as rich in effort for His own cause as ever. Yet He never reaches a hand out of the cloud to dispel the tempest of persecution or kill the worm of heresy. He works, it is true; but it is along the lines of nature, and through the complex mechanism by which the world is guided. On the one hand, the informing Spirit of the Church operates through ordinary channels of intelligence and moral influence; on the other hand, the common providence of God overrules, but nowhere overrides, contingencies. And to these two factors He has left His Church. So far, therefore, as any direct or personal interposition to modify the action of natural forces is concerned, He is like the farmer who, from seedtime to harvest, lets his field alone. "Till harvest," I say. For there is a second advent before us, when the order of the world is again to be broken through—this time with a view to be broken up. When the ripe fruit of the kingdom shall offer itself to the sickle, then will the Sower reappear.—*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*

*Spiritual growth.*—This parable is a brilliant example of the perfect naturalness of our Lord's teachings and the way in which He shews the underlying connexion between the two worlds, natural and spiritual. At first sight it might seem as if there were but few points of comparison between these two—between the work going on, for example, in the corn-field and the work going on in the human soul; for while trees and shooting corns have power of growth, they have no power of will; whereas man has both. And it is this power of will which is the determining factor in character and destiny. And yet, though these worlds are so dissimilar, there is an underlying unity; and it is this unity our Lord brings out in this parable. The central thought seems to be that God's Divine power is at work in God's own kingdom. "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself"—not of herself apart from God, but of herself apart from the man who sows the seed. He does his work, he sows the seed, and he goes on his way; and after he has done his part he sleeps by night and rises by day, and the seed springs up and grows, he knows not how.

**I. The kingdom of God.**—It is not that rule over the creatures which God as the Creator exercises, but that which is based on the mediatorial kingdom of Christ. It is the kingdom into which the poor in spirit enter, which is reserved for them who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; it is the kingdom which is for those who are pure in heart, who are born again of the Spirit of God; it is the kingdom which comes not by observation; it is a kingdom into which all men pass by repentance and faith; it is mysterious in its beginnings, silent in its growth, like the seed springing up from very small beginnings and growing to great things; and it is potent in its action, like the leaven in the meal. We are to pray for its coming, and yet it is always coming. Wherever there is a just thing taking the place of an unjust, wherever righteousness prevails over unrighteousness, wherever men are growing more kindly and true, wherever legislation is becoming more Christian, where commerce is baptised with the Spirit of Christ, where literature is guided by a Holy Spirit of God, when family life becomes ennobled and purified, when men come into holier and truer relations with one another and with their God in heaven, this kingdom is coming. We may well pray for its coming, for when it comes the

old trouble and sorrow and conflict of the centuries will vanish like an idle dream. Then, what hope have we that this kingdom will come? What is our consolation in regard to it amidst all discouragements of the time? Our Lord says, The same hope and the same encouragement that the man has who casts his seed into the ground. Everywhere men are dependent upon a great power which is working behind them; every day God brings the succession of day and night, so that men may carry on the work of their life. Every year comes the stately march of the seasons, or else there would be no harvest for men. Why, there is a standing miracle which would overwhelm us if we were not used to it every year—of that shooting of life in field and forest which the spring-time brings! So even in regions nearer to ourselves. Your very children spring up and grow you know not how. So we are to take this thought into the activities of the Christian Church. In this day of material progress and triumph we are apt to look rather at the organisations than at the Spirit which breathes through them; at what men do rather than at what God does behind; and our Lord here puts to us this great central fact. John Wesley's dying words are words of comfort for the Church in all the centuries: "The best of all is, God is with us. If He were not, our hope would be scant indeed." But He is. He is, in history, bringing new and strange and wondrous movements, developing a nation's life. He is in the Church of God convincing men of sin, carrying on the great work of building up men in the image of Jesus Christ.

**II. The need of patience.**—In carrying on this great work of bettering the world, elevating it higher, there is the element of time which must be taken into account. "The husbandman waiteth long and is patient." The earth says to him, "Give me seed, give me time, and I will give you fruit." And so it is in regard to the great things of the spiritual life. Everywhere we find that what is done is the result of long and complex forces. The more important a thing is, the longer time does it take. A man may be converted in a moment of time; but after he has turned right round the development of that life must needs take many long years of discipline before it reaches the height for which God intended it. Salvation means not merely delivering a man from sin, from every evil thing, but building him up to all nobleness; not merely the putting aside of what is weak and sinful, but the attainment of all that is noble and true; and is always the work of time. You can make a man a present of some material things in a moment, but you cannot give him patience, you cannot give him purity, you cannot give him humility, in a moment of time. Faith gets grip and strength through stress of suffering; wisdom is the child of experience.

**III. Spiritual continuity.**—Our Lord says there is a natural law of continuity in the spiritual life as there is in other things. "First the blade." We can never do without any of the intervening stages—never expedite the processes of God either in nature or in grace. Men are coming to see that everywhere this law prevails; history is coming to be regarded not as a mere set of isolated facts chronicled together in the manner of annals, but that the thought and the life of the past generations are living in the present, and shaping its thought and purposes, that the growth of opinion and the influence of thought are felt over and over again in succeeding generations. So it is in regard to the spiritual life; perfectly natural, perfectly simple and beautiful in its action is the life of God in the soul. 1. There is the green blade trembling in the breeze, the type of spiritual life in the young disciple. There seems at first very little in the way of positive Christian life. It is but a green blade touched by the wandering breeze; it seems very little; but if God's Spirit is in it, it will grow to greater things. 2. There is another stage, and it seems sometimes as if very little value could be attached to it except for what comes afterwards. Some-

times a man thinks he is losing ground, going back, when in point of fact God is training him for higher services and leading him to the heights of the Christian life. It is through the depths that we go to the heights. 3. There is another time yet. The time of the full ripe corn in the ear—the time which Bunyan sets before us in the picture of the land of Beulah, where the birds are for ever singing, the angels come and go, and you can see the city far away, its heights gleaming in the sunshine. There is a time when we think not so much of doctrines, though they have their importance, as we think of that which is behind the teaching—the living God; when we have not so many motives as one motive—love to Christ; when we feel more and more that He has been with us leading and guiding us; when we come out of the struggle not merely talking of the trouble but of the mercy which has been shown to us while we passed through it; when some things have fallen off from us that we thought important for us, and we get more and more to the central verities of eternal truth; when Christ becomes to the trusting soul all in all!—*John Brown, D.D.*

*Harvest lessons.*—Our Lord was very fond of drawing His parallels and illustrations from the garden and the field. This will be found a great help to those whose occupations lead them to be much abroad, and to take notice of the various appearances of nature as she works out the processes of vegetation.

**I. The harvest suggests grateful thoughts of the good providence of God.**—

1. We almost see Him “opening His hand and filling all things living with plenteousness.” What a family has He to provide for! Not only mankind, but “all sheep and oxen,” etc. (Ps. viii. 7, 8). “These wait all upon Him,” etc. (Ps. civ. 27). Nor wait in vain (Ps. cxlv. 15, 16). Well, therefore, does the psalmist call upon “beasts and all cattle,” etc., to “praise the name of the Lord” (Ps. cxlviii. 10, 13). 2. But the lower animals have neither understanding to know God, nor yet voice to praise Him. Man has both. Man is placed in this magnificent world, to be the interpreter of the whole creation. He is the priest of the temple, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto God. 3. Man is not only most capable of praising God, but he has also most cause to do so. Of all living things, he is maintained at the greatest cost.

**II. The harvest reminds us of the faithfulness of God.**—Once He brought a flood upon the earth; and for that year no sower went forth to sow, and no reaper put in his sickle. But after that He declared that it should never be so again (Gen. ix. 9-17). 2. Such is God’s promise; and those who have little respect for anything else He has said place entire reliance on this. They plough and they sow in perfect confidence that God will send heat and cold, sun and rain, everything that is necessary to produce a harvest. 3. Some years may be less favourable than others; some countries may be visited with a partial or even entire failure of the fruits of the earth; but the promise never fails. After a year of scarcity comes a year of extraordinary abundance, or the deficiency of one country is supplied by the excess of another. 4. There is only just enough uncertainty in these things to make serious people sensible of their absolute dependence upon Him who giveth all (Jer. v. 24; Deut. xi. 17).

**III. The harvest reminds us of the instability of man.**—1. “One generation passeth away,” etc. (Eccles. i. 4). We know, indeed, that the earth itself has its appointed time, and that the end of one harvest will be, to be burned up by that fire which shall consume the earth and all that is therein (2 Pet. iii. 10). Still, as compared with the rapid succession of its inhabitants, the earth may be said to “abide for ever,” yielding its fruit to the different generations of men, which quickly come and as quickly disappear. What a mortifying reflexion—that the very ground we tread on, even the dust we shake off our feet, is in this



respect better than ourselves! 2. Harvests measure our lives. Thousands will not live to see another harvest; nay, thousands are going out of the world, at this very season, while the provision of another year is being gathered in. They sowed, and others are reaping; or they reaped, and others have entered into the fruits of their labours.

IV. **The harvest makes us think about death.**—1. Death is the great reaper. When he “putteth in his sickle,” all heads bow down. His harvest is confined to no particular season. His are the only crops that never fail. 2. To the Christian death is no longer the “king of terrors.” He is cut down because he is ripe. He has passed through all the stages of spiritual growth and godliness—“first the blade,” etc. Then, when God judges that the fruit is perfectly formed in him—“the fruit of the Spirit, which is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth”—immediately He Himself “putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” 3. When the corn is fit to cut, it is a pity to let it stand any longer; and when a soul is ripe, it is equally desirable that it should be “taken away from the evil to come,” and lodged in a place of safety beyond the changes and chances of this mortal life.

V. **The harvest speaks to us of the resurrection and judgment.**—1. The resurrection parallel is developed by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 35-49. 2. The judgment may be considered in two lights. (1) It is God’s harvest (Matt. xiii. 30; Rev. xiv. 14-19). (2) It is man’s harvest also (Gal. vi. 7; 2 Cor. v. 10). This life is the seed-time of our whole existence. “The harvest is the *end* of the world”; and then shall every man “eat of the fruit of his way,” etc. (Prov. i. 31). “He that soweth to his flesh,” etc. (Gal. vi. 8). Let the censorious and uncharitable hear this (Matt. vii. 2). Let the unmerciful and unrelenting hear this (James ii. 13). Let the covetous hear this (James v. 2, 3). Let the despisers of the gospel hear this (Prov. i. 24-28). But as to those who are sowing, not to the flesh, but to the spirit, all that they have need of is that which every sower must possess—patience; that, “after they have done the will of God, they may receive the promises.”

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 26-29. *Rise and progress of religion in the heart.*—1. Religious impressions sometimes take their rise in the heart from small and apparently accidental circumstances. An observation casually made in conversation, the perusal of a book, one of those occurrences which we call accidents, or some serious misfortune, may be the means of either giving a man the first instruction in practical piety, or of causing him seriously to feel the importance of religion. 2. By whatever means the good seed is first sown in the heart, if it there meets with a congenial soil, a very short time will elapse before its existence and power begin to be perceived. As the tendency of natural vegetation is upwards, so the first aspirations of the regene-

rate soul are directed towards heaven. Its hopes and wishes rise gradually above the earth: under the fostering warmth of Divine grace holy dispositions spring and grow up in the man’s heart, he knoweth not how: his leaf withereth not: it is protected against the storms and blight which might infest it in its tender condition, so that the sun shall not burn it by day, neither the moon by night. 3. There remains one final labour of the husbandman before he can enjoy the full reward of all his anxieties and toils. “When the fruit is brought forth,” and fully ripened, the stem which unites it to the earth must be severed before it can be laid up in his barns. “Immediately,” therefore, “he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is

come." Maturity in spiritual growth is not always measured by length of years. Whenever the truly religious man is cut off, apparently in the flower of his age, we must regard the event as one of the mysteries which we understand not, as a dispensation, afflicting indeed to those who are left to mourn his loss, but not so to him, to whom "to die is gain." Conclusion: 1. This parable gives no excuse for slothfulness or negligence to the spiritual husbandman, but rather a season for constant exertion. 2. This parable instructs us all to be ready to receive religious instruction, as well as to impart it.—*Prof. T. Chevallier.*

*The development of good and evil.*—This parable is frequently explained of the silent and secret growth of grace in the individual character of God's servants, and of the final storing up of the wheat of earth in the garner of heaven. But surely the parable embraces a far wider horizon of thought, and concerns the method of God's procedure in the kingdom of Christ to the end of time—namely, the principle of allowing the full development of both evil and good until the hour strikes for judgment. In illustration of this our Lord sets forth the general laws of vegetable life on earth, which are analogous to the laws of spiritual development: (1) the law of growth or full development from germs; (2) the law of silent, gradual, unperceived increase; and (3) the law of crisis or ripeness, followed by the sickle and the harvest, the cutting down, either for storage or burning. The practical use, then, of this parable is to meet men's incredulity or doubt as to the reality of God's government on earth; which may arise, and often does arise, in the minds of Christ's followers from taking too short views, from looking at the world as already a finished thing, and therefore as an unintelligible chaos, a field where good and bad grow hopelessly together; to meet this incredulity and doubt by the assurance that the fixed method of the Divine government is not hasty and

sudden harvesting and uprooting, but to allow all germs of both good and evil to develop and mature; and then, when the time of full ripeness arrives, to put in the sickle—to postpone the crisis till "iniquity is full," and heroic righteousness in resistance is also at the full—and then to bring in sudden judgment and retribution.—*E. White.*

*Lessons.*—1. Though the sower sleep after his labour, yet the process of germination goes on night and day. 2. Simple beginnings and practical results may be connected by mysterious processes: "he knoweth not how." There is a point in Christian work where knowledge must yield to mystery. 3. As the work of the sower is assisted by natural processes ("the earth bringeth forth of itself," etc.), so the seed of truth is aided by the natural conscience and aspiration which God has given to all men. 4. The mysteriousness of processes ought not to deter from reaping the harvest. The spiritual labourer may learn from the husbandman.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*The Word of life in the figure of a grain of wheat.*—1. Its internal energy of life. 2. Its growth according to laws. 3. Its gradualness. 4. Its progressive stages. 5. The certainty of its development.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*Divine surprises.*—The little green growth, as it forces its way through the soil, is not prepared for the great surprises of its own development; it is not prepared for the beautiful verdure of the green field caused by its own shooting up, nor even then for a still further development; for now comes the ear with its promises of even farther development—with its promises of great usefulness, of some time furnishing food for the eater. And even then greater surprises are still in store; for the ear can scarcely guess—this little ear of wheat not yet developed, just heavy enough to bend the stem on which it is growing—it is scarcely prepared for the still further surprises of the full wheat, or corn, in the ear; and men and women, following this same thought, begin to realise that

there is within them something of Divine, God-like possibility.—*S. R. Fuller.*

*Growth.*—If you, as an individual soul, are not bigger, fuller of Divine power and inspiration, than you were five or ten years ago, it is because this process of growth has been hindered or thwarted by your own rebellious interference—as if the farmer who has sown the seed should untimely scratch away the earth and hinder the germ's expansion, or later on, heedless of law, should walk rough-shod over this early verdure and thwart its development.—*Ibid.*

*Gradual progress towards perfection.*—Like those wondrous insects of the branching coral, who, beneath the waters of the vast Southern Ocean, lay their slight foundation, ever adding a little, and still a little more, while, as years pass on, the work goes on increasing, till the little unperceived atom stands forth a fair island, bursting with tropical luxuriance of fruit and foliage—so should it be with us. The seed is sown within our hearts. The Heavenly Husbandman—the Builder also—is at work within. Leave Him who sowed to do His holy will. And it shall work mightily within you—moulding, leavening, forming, building, spreading, springing up and growing, as none “knoweth how,” till there loom forth within the chaos of the natural heart the glorious form and lineaments of “the Perfect Man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” Himself.—*Dean Butler.*

Ver. 26. “*The kingdom of God*” is a phrase more easy to understand than to explain. It is God's government over the world; the Church chosen out of the world; the authority exercised over each soul; the spiritual progress of the community, of the truth, of any special member. It is God's dealings with men as seen from above. In it all outward things are included. But it is still an inward thing. Its hidden nature is illustrated here by comparisons

taken from the growth of seeds. The grain is lost to our sight, and the growth is too gradual to be seen. But we need only fresh senses to which the earth shall be transparent, and the smallest increase visible, in order to see them. And so the effects of God's Word and Providence are only invisible because of our infirmity. We know very little about the soil; one is good, another bad; one will grow such things, another such; and wise men know a little about its parts, and how they act. And just such a knowledge it is that we have of men. We distinguish them roughly, and know practically what to expect from them, and our philosophers have analysed characters and mental processes. It is upon such soil that the facts of the gospel are cast as seed out of which is to grow the plant of holiness. But God does not leave the soul alone. Just as Providence works in the natural soil, bringing it into a fit composition, providing vegetable and animal growths, and checking each when it has done its work, so that the soil when left alone grows more and more fertile, so is Providence working with the souls of men, and by the myriad accidents of life moulding and forming them. We cannot tell, when we speak, how our words may be taken. We cannot tell, from the way they are taken, what their ultimate effect may be. Now this may operate to discourage and chill. We all like to see how our work is getting on; we all strive to help on our own purposes. But this parable is meant to encourage us all. We must leave much to other powers, and cannot order all things as we would: other men will not obey us; we cannot make them listen; we cannot order our own circumstances or theirs; and yet they are ordered. We must leave them to Him that ordereth, *i.e.* God.—*Bishop Steere.*

Ver. 28. *Blade, ear, and full corn.*—1. “The blade” begins in a small shoot. That shoot is but the elongation or enlargement of the germ which is



found at the rough end of a grain of wheat. This is elongated by the addition of fresh cells, which continues until the blade is fully formed. Now the idea of Jesus, sown in a suitable mind, develops in the same way by growing first into enlarged knowledge, idea after idea being added until a new form of thinking is unfolded. New ideas of God, of ourselves, of our fellow-men, arise. We think differently of life's duties, experiences, and purposes. 2. "The ear" is the case in which the corn is formed; it is preparatory to the fruit, and determines it. The ear is thus the purposes of good in the will. The new thought and knowledge, under the warm love of the soul, begins to form purposes, to propose ends, which are but Christian thinking passing into Christian aims. At first these plans will give little promise of being realised; they will be rather suggestions of what might possibly be. But the sun of love in the soul shines upon them with glowing warmth, and the ear puts forth its modest blossom. That blossom is the joy that comes of such purposes; there is a pleasure in contemplating the possibility of bringing a practical result out of our new thoughts and plans. When the blossom, or joy, has fully developed, then is the time for the fruit to begin to form. The vital principle of good which is in the joy, as the pollen is in the blossom, finds its way into the will, and there it grows into action—the plans for mending our life and the world take practical shape—at first, however, only imperfectly. 3. "The full corn" is the reproduction of that which came to us as seed—that is, our lives yield a result which is the reproduction of the character of Jesus. This third stage is only partially reproduced in the best of men in this life; but it *will* be perfectly attained. There is no Christ-given thought which shall not also become Christ-like endeavour; and there is no Christ-like endeavour which shall fail to become an attained practical result.—*R. Vaughan.*

*Encouragement for Christian workers.*

—1. We should never be discouraged in Christian work, of whatever kind, by what seems a slow growth. 2. We should never be discouraged in our efforts for Christ's kingdom by adverse circumstances; nor by any unexpected combination of them, and their prolonged operation. 3. Good influences are linked to good issues in this world, as the seed to its fruitage. 4. God is within and behind all forces that tend to enlarge and perfect His kingdom, as He is beneath the physical forces which bring harvest in its season, and set on the springing seed its coronal. 5. Finally, let us remember what the glory of the harvest shall be, when it is reached, in this developing kingdom of God; and in view of that let us constantly labour, with more than fidelity, with an eager enthusiasm that surpasses all obstacles, makes duty a privilege, and transmutes toil into joy.—*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*

*Growth in the spiritual world*, as in the natural, is spontaneous, in the sense that it is subject to definite laws of the spirit over which man's will has small control. The fact is one to be recognised with humility and thankfulness. With humility, for it teaches dependence on God—a habit of mind which brings along with it prayerfulness, and which, as honouring to God, is more likely to ensure ultimate success than a self-reliant zeal. With thankfulness, for it relieves the heart of the too heavy burden of an undefined, unlimited responsibility, and makes it possible for the minister of the Word to do his work cheerfully, in the morning sowing the seed, in the evening withholding not his hand; then retiring to rest to enjoy the sound sleep of the labouring man, while the seed sown springs and grows apace, he knoweth not how. Growth in the spiritual world, as in the natural, is, further, a process, which demands time and gives ample occasion for the exercise of patience. Time must elapse even between the sowing and the braiding—a fact to be laid to heart by parents and teachers, lest

they commit the folly of insisting on seeing the blade at once, to the probable spiritual hurt of the young intrusted to their care. Much longer time must elapse between the braiding and the ripening. That a speedy sanctification is impossible we do not affirm; but it is, we believe, so exceptional that it may be left altogether out of account in discussing the theory of Christian experience. Once more, growth in the spiritual world, as in the natural, is graduated; in that region as in this there is a blade, a green ear, and a ripe ear.—*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*

*Order of growth.*—Not only does the corn always go on growing, but it always observes the same order and succession in its growth—"first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." This is an order which is never reversed or altered; it is always the full corn in the ear which is the last to shew itself. And so it is with the heart. First, it is always repentance and sorrow for sin; then, faith in Jesus Christ; then, without losing these, any more than the grain loses the protection of the blade and the ear, it goes on to holiness of life, and a sure hope in God's promises; and last of all to love—love the ripened corn, the fulfilling of the ear.—*H. Harris.*

*The beauty of early piety.*—How refreshing to the eye is the garb of green with which the field is clothed, when the tender blade has first sprung up! But a short time back all lay in a state of ruggedness and an unseemly mass of clods. And not less grateful to the eye of those interested in the spiritual welfare of others are the first dawns and buddings of faith and love in the Christian's heart, when the "good seed" puts forth its first increase in those around us. How pleasing to witness the young and tender plant of righteousness putting forth the buds and leaves of Christian advancement! How pleasing to observe the gradual increase of piety, of Christian feeling, of prayer, of love, and of joy, bursting forth and ripening

into full experience for the coming harvest.—*J. L. F. Russell.*

Ver. 29. *God's sickle.*—The physical world contains evidence of such periods of catastrophe and new creation. The ages of universal fire and molten elements were ended by the creation of life on the globe, at some time in the past eternity, as Prof. Bonney demonstrates in his Hulsean Lecture. And many times since, locally if not universally, there have been epochs of change, of "new heavens and new earth," of new forms of life, vegetable and animal, of vast destruction and wholly new formation of land and sea, with their inhabitants. The history of the world of mankind during the historic period furnishes many examples of this law of the kingdom of God. When the harvest is come, He putteth in the sickle. The old world grew up from a single pair, and developed its good and evil. At length evil prevailed, "and the flood came and took them all away." Again the world started with a single family, and again evil and apostasy prevailed. Then God added a fresh element to human history in the family of Abraham. When evil increased judgment descended on them, as also on Egypt, Assyria, Edom, Babylon, Tyre, Persia, Greece, Rome. Jerusalem itself was destroyed, and the Jews were scattered. The Jewish vintage of evil was ripe for the wine-press. The same law has ruled in the Gentile modern world. The bloody vintage came for the Roman Empire in the fifth century, for Eastern Christendom in the seventh, by the hand of the Mohammedans, and later by the Turkish Power. It came later on for European wickedness in the French Revolution. And it is coming again in the great battles and tribulations of the last days, when the clusters of the Vine of the Earth shall "be cast into the wine-press of the wrath and fury of Almighty God." Right-doing and Wrong-doing are ripening on every side. Every nation on earth, every soul on earth, is ripen-

ing as wheat for the harvest in the garner of God, or as a cluster of the vine of the earth for the wine-press of His wrath. This "sharp sickle" hovers in the sky suspended by an Almighty Hand. But it is there, and it is visible to the spiritual eye; often it takes a

lifetime to demonstrate fully the real characters of men. The evolution requires space for development in relation to individual character. St. Paul sums up all these facts in 1 Tim. v. 24, 25. —*E. White.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 30—34.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xiii. 31, 32; LUKE xiii. 18, 19.)

*The rise and progress of Christianity.*—I. **Christianity is insignificant in its beginning.** 1. Its Founder assumed a humble form. 2. Its first advocates were obscure. 3. Its sphere of action was confined. 4. Its first converts were few. 5. Its mode of operation was unassuming. 6. Its reception was unpopular.

II. **Christianity is gradual in its progress.**—1. The difficulties with which it has to contend are tremendous. 2. The means which it adopts are moral. 3. The change which it attempts is radical. 4. The field in which it works is extensive. 5. The time at its disposal is long. 6. The results which it contemplates are eternal.

III. **Christianity will be great in its consummation.** 1. It will be the mightiest display of God's energy. 2. It will be the holiest manifestation of God's character. 3. It will be the truest exhibition of God's faithfulness. 4. It will be the wisest revelation of God's intelligence. 5. It will be the most benevolent expression of God's love. 6. It will be the sublimest source of God's glory. (1) It will be the acknowledged instrument of His complete overthrow of sin. (2) It will be time's sole surviving wonder for the admiration of the spiritual universe. (3) It will be the redeemed's theme of sweetest song of gratitude to God. (4) It will be the climax of Christ. Then God will be all in all.

**Lessons.**—1. Despise not the day of small things. 2. Exercise patience. 3. Be active. 4. Draw upon the glorious future.—*B. D. Johns.*

I. **The comparative insignificance of Christianity at the first.**—1. Contrast the gorgeous ritual of the Temple with the unostentatious worship inculcated by Christ. 2. Contrast the elaborate systems of philosophers with the simple teaching of our Lord. 3. Contrast the social position of the priests with that of the apostles. 4. Contrast the multitudes who followed priests and philosophers with the few who were the disciples of Jesus.

II. **The careful implantation of Christianity.**—1. Not a handful, but a solitary seed (Acts iv. 12). 2. Not accidentally but designedly sown. Christ personally performed the work. 3. In a chosen and appropriate spot.

III. **The rapid growth of Christianity.**—1. In three or four centuries it had spread so far and wide that Christians were found in Rome, Asia Minor, Greece, Syria, Russia, Germany, Gaul, Persia, Armenia, Egypt, Arabia, Abyssinia, and indeed in almost every known land. 2. It became so great a tree, that persecution could not uproot or even injure it; so great, that the eyes of three continents looked on in amazement; so great, that the trees of idolatry and superstition had no room for growth. 3. Every obstacle malice could throw in its way had been employed. All classes laid their axe to its root. Philosophers brought their satire, priests their anathemas, kings their laws. All in vain. The tree not only resisted every blow, but shattered to atoms every axe which assailed it.



Its devotees were nailed to crosses, and, dying, cried, "It must grow." Thousands at the stake exulted as they said, "We burn, but it cannot wither."

IV. **The natural phenomenon resulting.**—Ver. 32 ult. Observe, the very same class of men who sought to destroy Christianity at its introduction afterward gladly espoused it for their own personal ends. The tree was planted by God to give shelter to the weary and sad; it was not designed for such birds of prey; and sooner or later all the mercenary ones shall be driven away by the power of Him who planted it.—*R. A. Griffin.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 30-32. *Christianity a living organism.*—Hitherto the Christian kingdom has been represented by a crowd of distinct though similar corn-plants—contiguous yet individual. Now the deeper truth is hinted at that all Christian men and women make up in some sense a single living organism, with its root deep hid in the earth, of whose fatness we all partake. It enters into the very idea of a tree that its various parts are the outcome of the same life-force, which originally was shut up in a tiny unpromising seed, which yet before it has spent itself creates that umbrageous fruitful whole, from gnarled root to topmost, outmost twig. The glories of mid-summer leafage, on which the breezes play low airs, while the sunbeams dance a dance of green and gold; riches of autumn berry dropping to the gatherer's hand; subtle harmony of curve as the boughs lean to balance one another; mystic new birth as often as the spring sends a reviving tide of sap through every branch; unwearied effort to put forth fresh lines of growth from each budding point; while the records of a hundred seasons of storm and contest and victorious life are graven on its furrowed sides and stubborn limbs,—how wonderful, how endless in delight and mystery, is the world of life to be found within a single tree; and yet its age-long growth and all its splendours come from the forces hid in one smooth brown rind over which a boy's fingers could be clasped in sport! This beautiful figure for an organised community of men

bound by a common life, sprung from small beginnings, and lasting through many generations—the figure of a tree—was not a new one in the hands of Jesus. He found it in the literature of His people. As far back as the age of the Captivity it had become usual with the great prophets to compare the kingdom of Judah to a vine, and the mighty empire which threatened it to a cedar tree. But the figure had disappeared from Hebrew literature till our Lord revived it in the words before us. With characteristic homeliness, He selects from the vegetable creation a plant whose lowly appearance contrasts strangely with the vine of Isaiah, the cedar of Ezekiel, or the olive of St. Paul. It was not for its homeliness, however, that He chose it, although conspicuously His emblems are all taken from the most familiar objects of common life. It was because, for another reason, it suited His purpose best. We measure roughly with the eye the power of growth which resides in a plant, by the disproportion we discover betwixt the smallness of the seed and the largeness of the perfect plant. When a comparatively minute seed develops into a comparatively big tree, you are much struck by the force of life there was in it. Now of this the mustard formed an excellent familiar instance. It was, in fact, the least of the seeds usually sown by people in Palestine, and therefore passed in the proverbial speech of the country-folk for the least thing in the world. Yet, strange to add, the full-grown mustard plant was "the largest

of garden herbs": nay, "greater than all herbs," since sometimes it shot out branches so as to pass fairly beyond the rank of a "herb" and become quite a "tree," under whose shadow the field birds could perch. Precisely so is it found growing wild to this day by the Lake of Galilee—a tall shrub, or dwarf tree, some ten feet in height. On this point of comparison rests the stress of the parable. Christianity is not only a creation of the Saviour's own life; it is the work and monument of the most extraordinary spiritual force we know. The kingdoms of the world were round Him where He sat—relics of ancient empires, which, in their day, Ezekiel had likened to the grand mountain cedar, with a "shadowing shroud" and a lofty stature. Yet now these all lay "fallen" and "broken" and "left," as Ezekiel had foretold; while over them towered one world-empire huger than any of its fore-runners, whose very fragments constitute our modern empires. Rome filled the wide earth with its shade as He spoke. Tiny beside the mighty bulk of overshadowing Rome, as a very mustard seed, was this carpenter's Son and the handful of followers He left behind Him. Yet who does not know how unexpectedly the little spiritual kingdom of Jesus grew up out of His own grave to develop the mightiest force which history has to tell of; how speedily it thrust out its branches into every land, and sent its roots along every water-course; how it reckons at this hour a larger census of citizens than the most populous of secular sovereignties? By its own inward force of Divine life did it grow so large. And still it grows, and sees the old poison plants of heathendom, beneath whose deadly boughs the people sat, droop and die around its feet, and welcomes to its grateful shade the wandering souls of men who crave for rest and for refreshing. It

yields its fruit every month, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.—*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*

*A parable of promise.*—This is a parable of promise, speaking to the heart and to the community. It says, "Hope for much, but expect it only little by little." When Livingstone had measured his work and his powers, he said this as his last word: "It is but little we can do, but we lodge a protest in the heart against a vile system, and time may ripen it." And whenever we do our best, and trust and pray our best, though that best be but little, still we also may hope that God will favour it, and that time will ripen it. For the little of our day is often the seed of much in a day to come; and no one who works in his place can tell what his work will grow to, or how much God may make of it.—*T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.*

Vers. 33, 34. *The duties of the Christian teacher.*—1. He must adapt himself to his hearers. Are they young? are they educated? are they courageous? are they surrounded by any peculiar circumstances? 2. He must consider his hearers rather than himself. This was Jesus Christ's method. The question should be, not what pleases the preacher's taste, but what is most required by the spiritual condition of the people. 3. He must increase his communication of truth and light according to the progress of his scholars. Reticence is power. In teaching children the teacher should not dazzle them by the splendour of his attainments; he adapts the light to the strength of their mental vision. The preacher should always know more of Divine truth than the hearer. Christ's method of imparting knowledge is, so far as we can infer, unchanged. He has yet more light to shed upon His Word.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 35—41.

(PARALLELS: MATT. viii. 18, 23-27; LUKE viii. 22-25.)

*The storm on the lake.*—How pleasant it is to stand upon the beach, when there is a glorious sunset, to look upon the vast expanse, to gaze upon the splendid colours of the clouds! Only a gentle ripple disturbs the surface of the water. All nature is preparing for its evening rest. But observe; a vessel is approaching, and others are following. A great Personage is about to embark: the Prophet of Galilee. He has brought consolation to many hearts during the day; for He has been teaching in the neighbouring towns and healing the sick. And now, having dismissed the multitude, He desires to pass over to the other side of the sea or lake. But as we stand watching the departing ships a breeze springs up. And mark yonder clouds. Observe, Christ's attendants are taking the necessary precautions, for they know how rapidly a storm gathers on the lake. It is the same to-day. Sir Charles Wilson, when in Galilee some time ago, encountered a violent storm. He says: "The morning was delightful. A gentle easterly breeze, and not a cloud in the sky to give warning of what was coming. Suddenly, about midday, there was a sound of distant thunder, and a small cloud, 'no bigger than a man's hand,' was seen rising over the heights. The cloud appeared to spread, and heavy black masses came rolling down the hills. At the moment the breeze died away, there were a few minutes of perfect calm. But soon the thunder-gust, advancing across the lake, lifted the placid water into a bright sheet of foam. For more than an hour . . . peals of thunder and torrents of rain." It was just such a storm as this that overwhelmed Christ's ship, and yet we read that the Redeemer was asleep in the hinder part of the ship—asleep, tired, fatigued. I like to think of Christ sleeping. It shews that He had our nature. We have a Saviour who has ascended into the highest heaven, and yet who sympathises with our infirmities because He is man. "Without one sign of confusion, without one feeling of alarm, Jesus raised Himself from the dripping stern of the labouring and half-sinking vessel, and without further movement stilled the tempest of their souls by the quiet words, "Why so cowardly, O ye of little faith?" And then rising up, standing in all the calm of a natural majesty, He gazed forth into the darkness, and His voice was heard amid the roaring of the troubled elements, saying, "Peace, be still!" and instantly the wind dropped, and there was a great calm.

**I. To succeed and be safe in our passage through life we must have Christ with us.**—There are men who commenced life, so to speak, in a very small ship, and they felt how helpless they would be if any storm should arise. Night after night, and day by day, they implored Christ to be with them, to give them health, prosperity, and success. Those men reached their harbour, sold their goods, built a large ship, Christ again with them. No storm ever overwhelmed them. To-day they give *Him* all the honour. But there are men who believe they can dispense with the Divine Presence. Have they not wealth? Have they not excellent investments? Why, they could get through any storm. And then they are put to the test. Slowly the clouds gather, the wind rises, and then secretly they begin to feel matters are getting serious. But still they hope to weather the storm. Something will happen; they must be more careful in future. I knew just such a man. He rose from a humble position to one of great wealth; but he refused to give God the honour. He boasted openly of his own good management, whereby he had succeeded so well; and first one loss came, and then another, until at last he was overwhelmed. No Christ in



the ship. Oh, my brethren, if you desire *lasting* success, if you would have help in trouble, if you hope to reach the other side in safety, ask Christ to accompany you in the ship!

**II. It was a difficult matter to follow Christ's ship because of the boisterous waves.** The vessels that followed Christ's ship must have encountered the same storm. No one ever yet found it an easy matter to follow Christ because of the forces against us. There is the flesh to contend with, the World and the Evil One to encounter. In your own strength you will not be able to follow Christ, to obey His commandments; so frail is human nature, what are you to do? Christ has promised to give you such help that you can always be victorious. This help is called *grace*. But if you do not ask Him for what He has promised to give, and as a result are unable to resist the storm of the flesh or the powers of darkness—if you lose paradise, it will be your own fault; you can blame no one but yourself.

**III. Divine aid interposing when all human power has failed.**—God permits “human affairs to proceed to a given point, and at the vital moment outstretches His arm.” Have you never seen Him do that? Have you never observed some illness suddenly take a favourable turn, or a perplexity vanish, or the prodigal repent, at the request of some praying one? Some time ago a vessel was sailing through Lake Erie. It was early in the season, and great blocks of ice were floating about. All at once the captain saw that the ice was closing the ship in on all sides. He summoned the passengers, and informed them of the position. He said nothing but the direct interference of Almighty God could save the ship. Immediately all knelt down and asked for help, and after a few minutes the man at the wheel shouted that it was all right now; the wind was changing, and blowing the ice out of the way. Divine aid comes when human power fails. Ah! there is a moment coming for us all when no earthly friend will be able to assist us, when the words are heard, “Pass over to the other side.” Then if we have not Divine aid, what shall we do? But if we have Christ with us, we shall possess His peace, we shall be safe for eternity.—*E. R. Sill.*

*The Church in peril.*—**I. The Church is like a ship.**—Noah's Ark was a type of Christ's Church, in that as he and his family were saved in the ark from perishing by water, so we, by being admitted into the Church, are by baptismal water saved from perishing. So the Church tells us in her office of baptism, where she drives on the allegory throughout, praying that God would sanctify the child with the Holy Ghost, that he, being delivered from wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's Church, and, being steadfast in faith, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally he may come to the land of everlasting life. Nor is the ark alone so appropriate a resemblance of the Church, as that any ordinary ship may not, in some kind or other, represent it, whether it be for passage, for merchandise, or for war. Look we on the make and build of it; 'tis fitly compacted and framed together, both for strength and beauty. If we consider it in its furniture and tackle, it has its compass to sail by, the Word of God; its sails of devout affections, to be filled with the breathings of His Spirit; and its anchor of hope to stay itself upon, the merits of His Son. If we regard the design of a ship to go from port to port, ours is bound heavenward; for we seek a country, even the land of everlasting life, as ye heard before. The Church entertains passengers to waft them into the regions of bliss; it has her cargo of Divine truths; and as a man-of-war, too, she is all along throughout her whole voyage militant. As to her manage and conduct, she has Christ for her Pilot, and under Him the Chief Magistrate to steer the vessel and to govern the ship's crew. But in no one thing is the Church more like to a ship than in those frequent dangers and jeopardies she is to undergo,—dangers from without;

all the elements as it were conspiring her ruin; rocks and shelves to split her; flats and quicksands to founder her; tempests and storms of persecutions to overwhelm her; corsairs and pirates, all her ghostly foes, to attack her,—dangers from within, by leaks of schism and division, and many other casualties through negligence or ill government.

**II. Distress is a very fit season for devotion.**—The sense of present danger awakens the worst of men to the practice of this duty of prayer, and our earnest prayer awakens God to our relief. The psalmist tells us that at God's word or command the stormy wind arises which lifteth up the waves. And probably for this very reason God sometimes causes, or at least most times permits, storms and troubles to arise upon His Church, that His people, who, when they are safe and see all things quiet about them, are too apt to forget God, and refuse to hearken to the still voice of His Word and to obey His commandments, may from such terrible dismal instances of danger learn to fear Him, to adore His majesty, to acknowledge His power, to implore His goodness, and in their great distress to cry unto Him for help: "Save, Lord, or else we perish."

**III. Our extremity is God's opportunity.**—I have read a dismal description of a shipwreck in a Greek romance—when all the passengers, and seamen too, with hands and eyes and hearts lifted up to heaven, fetched the last shriek, expecting with their tattered vessel immediately to go down quick to the bottom of the sea. And when men are in such a posture of danger, how is God's mercy signalled at such a time in their preservation? This, I say, is business in ordinary providence; but when the ship, which Himself with His almighty care and skill has undertaken to steer and bring to her desired port, when the safety and interest of His Church and people, is reduced to extremity, how much more reason have we to expect the extraordinary effects of His power and goodness, who both can and will provide for His, when they are destitute of all other help? When a Church or nation is, to the eye of man, in all human probability, given up for lost, when all other helps and means fail, then is God's time to come in at a dead lift, who is already help in the needful time of trouble. There is nothing so secret which He cannot bring to light, nothing so strong which can resist His power, nothing so cunningly contrived which He cannot disappoint.

**IV. Christ, as He is the Founder of our religion, so He is the sole Author of our deliverances.**—To Thee, O holy Jesu, who wast the Founder of our faith and holy profession, we fly in all our distresses, as to our only Deliverer. In Thy merits and satisfaction, in Thy mediation and intercessions, alone we fix the anchor of our hope. In Thy saving health we repose all our trust and ground our assurance. To Thee alone it is that we address our requests. Thy patronage alone is all-sufficient for our direction in life, for our protection in danger. Thou art the way and the truth and the life—the way in Thy holy example, the truth in Thy heavenly doctrine, and the life in the application of Thy merit.—*Adam Littleton, D.D.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 35. "*Unto the other side.*"—  
1. A watchword of faith, breaking through all narrow boundaries. 2. A watchword of love, overcoming all selfishness. 3. A watchword of courage, overcoming all dangers.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

Christ is continually saying the same

to us, though with varying meaning in His words. He is ever calling us to pass over some line into new fields, with their new experiences, privileges, duties, conflicts, joys. 1. He says it to the impenitent, when He graciously invites them to become His disciples. He wants them to cut loose from this

world, from sin and all their old dead past, and rise up and go with Him to the better life which lies beyond. 2. He gives the same call and invitation to His people, when they reach the end of earthly life, and He comes to take them home. Before them rolls the sea of death, dark and full of terrors to the natural sense. But on "the other side" glory waits.—*J. R. Miller, D.D.*

Ver. 36. *Christ on board.*—Christ will come on board your boat. Life has often been described as a voyage, and it is an appropriate description. He will come, I say, on board the barque in which your destiny is being carried forward. He will start with you if you want Him. He will identify Himself with the poorest if only you are a disciple, if you are willing to sit at His feet and learn of Him. Will you take Him then as He is? will you make common cause with Him? Evidently this manner of man will sail the seas of time with anybody who will simply be friends with Him, who will lie down and be at peace with Him. Are you of that disposition towards Him?—*J. McNeill.*

Where the Lord is there should His servants and apostles be,—in danger as well as in peace; as feeding the multitude, so sharing in His troubled and evening voyage: not only treading in His footsteps, but partaking in the holy confidence of their Master's faith, who committed Himself with all confidence to the winds and waves.—*W. Scott.*

These "other little ships" doubtless enjoyed a share in the blessing of calm obtained by the ship that bare Jesus. I have sometimes thought that they picture vividly the fortunes of these societies, that, in these later ages, have moved in the wake of the ancient Apostolic Church, that with it are forced to endure the storms of a world impartially hostile to every form of religious effort, and that are not without participating in the blessings of the Holy Presence, abiding in that

Church as long as in sincerity of heart they endeavour to keep up with the Master in His course (Mark ix. 38; Exod. xii. 38; 1 Cor. i. 2; Eph. vi. 24).—*W. A. Butler.*

Vers. 37-40. *Christ's victory over feeble-minded unbelief.*—1. He leads little faith into danger. 2. He lets it wrestle with the peril to the utmost point. 3. He convicts, humbles, and heals it.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*Here Christ exhibits Himself as—*1. The true and holy Man. 2. The wise and gracious Master. 3. The almighty and adorable Son of God.—*Ibid.*

*An image of the Christian life.*—1. The threatening danger. 2. The growing anxiety. 3. The delivering might. 4. The rising thanks.—*Ibid.*

*Trial and deliverance work together.*—1. To reveal the Lord. 2. To train His people. 3. To advance the coming of His kingdom.—*Ibid.*

*The Sea of Galilee* is an inland lake surrounded by hills, save at each of its extremities, where are narrow passages, affording an entrance and outlet to the Jordan. The river, flowing through the lake, creates a current, which is felt even to the very shores. Like all other inland seas surrounded by mountains, the lake, though usually placid, is subject to sudden gusts from the hollows of the mountains, and to violent eddies and storms, short in duration, but violent in their effects. Especially when the storm-gusts sweep down upon the lake from the south (the direction in which the boat was to proceed), the wind meeting and opposing the current of the Jordan, soon lashes the surface into fury.

*Christ's presence causes storms.*—Until Christ was in the ship, there was no storm. While men have pillows sewn under their elbows, all is peace; but so soon as Christ rebukes the world of sin, the wicked are like the raging sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up dirt and mire.—*Dean Boys.*

*Suddenness of life's storms.*—Thus many of life's storms come. Tempta-



tions come when we are not looking for them. So disasters come. We are at peace in a happy home. At an hour when we think not, without warning, the darling child we love so much lies dead in our arms. The friend we trusted, and who we thought could never fail us, proves false. The hopes cherished for years wither in our hands in a night, like flowers when the frost comes. The storms of life are nearly all sudden surprises. They do not hang out danger-signals days before to warn us. The only way to be ready for them is to be always ready.—*J. R. Miller, D.D.*

Ver. 38. *Christ asleep*.—He who “never slumbereth nor sleepeth” is asleep! Not that He *seemed* to sleep, as has been said, but “He was asleep.” Now, as God, of course our Lord could not, did not, sleep, it was only in His humanity that “His eyes were heavy to sleep.” But more than this may be said. He slept, it may be, for a purpose, *i.e.* to shew the apostles that where He was there was no real danger, and to teach Christian souls calmly and faithfully to repose on Him, while all outward things seem most distressing.—*W. Scott.*

*Asleep amid storms*.—What are the world’s angry storms—the miserable uncertainties and chances of this mortal life—the malice of evil angels—the tossing about of mingled hopes and fears: nay, what is the nearness of death itself, what is danger, what is fear, to the faithful Christian? Like his Lord, he may sleep calmly through all the wild commotions of the world, in prayer it must have been, and converse with His and our Heavenly Father.—*Ibid.*

*Salvation spiritual*.—The spirit of Christ, not the body of Christ, must save the Church in all peril. The sleeping body was in the vessel, but it exercised no influence upon the storm. It is possible to have an embalmed Christ, and yet to have no Christianity. It is also possible to have the letter of Christ’s Word with-

out the spirit and power of His truth.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*Unbelief*.—I. Some of the circumstances in which this question of unbelief arises in the mind.—In relation to—1. Temporal things: poverty, adversity, distress, sickness, bereavement, danger. 2. Spiritual things: darkness, loneliness, temptation. 3. Others: sunk in ignorance and sin.

II. How Christ rebukes our unbelief; and the proofs which God has given that He cares for us.—1. The instincts which God has implanted in the human heart. 2. The ample provision He has made for all our necessities. 3. The fact that others care for us. 4. Even the storms through which we pass are often the result of God’s care for us: “Whom I love I rebuke and chasten.”

*Conclusion*.—If God so cares for us, we ought to—1. Care for ourselves. 2. Care for those around us. 3. Cast all our cares upon Him.—*A. Clark.*

*Signs of a weak faith*.—1. Fear in danger. 2. Doubt of the Lord’s power in danger. 3. Anxious solicitude about earthly things. 4. Impatience under trouble (*Isa. xxviii. 16*).

*Fear and faith*.—Though fear caused self-abandonment, faith provided guidance to the right person. Fear commanded, “Drop your oar.” Faith directed, “Go to Jesus.” Fear said, “Your case is hopeless.” Faith said, “Seek safety in Christ.” Fear made them ready to go. Faith led in the right way. Fear cried, “We perish! we perish!” Faith prayed, “Master, carest Thou not? Lord, save! save!”

*A model prayer*.—It was short, appropriate, fervent. The disciples knew what they wanted, and they asked for it. Our prayers often fail to gain us a blessing because they lack definiteness. In a long prayer we have sometimes been prayed into a good frame of mind and out of it. Dr. Talmage suggests that, in the case of most of our prayers, they would be better and more helpful if we were to cut off a bit from each end and set

fire to the middle. The prayer of the disciples did what the storm had failed to do. There is an instinctive tendency in the human heart to pray when confronted suddenly by imminent peril, e.g. Jonah i. 13, 14; Ps. cvii. 5, 6, 11-13, 17-19, 28. "Some will never pray until they are half starved."

Ver. 39. *Trials not always calamities.*—Had the apostles been inquired of before the storm ceased, they would have replied that the tempest was a great misfortune, that they were much to be pitied, that they were in the very greatest peril. But was it so? Was the storm such a calamity? It was a trial, and for the time a bitter one; but it wrought good, unalloyed good, in the end. And is not this a parable of life? 1. The ancients were wont constantly to use the figure of a ship as a similitude of the Church of Christ; and our Baptismal Office preserves this ancient usage, when we pray that the newly baptised may be received into the Ark of Christ's Church, and may so pass the waves of this troublesome world as finally to attain the land of life. The Church, then, is as a ship, often tossed by tempest, sometimes seeming to the eye of man as if it were now full of water, ready to sink, but yet never sinking, because Christ is in her. She has been in great danger, so that her crew have been compelled to cast out with their own hands the lading of the ship, her possessions and her dignities; but yet, at the hour of greatest need, has she been rescued by Him who never left her—who seemed to sleep, but yet who suffered the storm to arise—even by Him who never slumbers nor sleeps in His providential government. As the infant Church, represented by the apostles, was tossed upon the Sea of Galilee, so is the Christian Church by the waves of the world, the machinations of evil spirits, the pride and the passion of men; and as the apostles rose up after their trial stronger in the faith, so even now does tribulation better than prosperity develop that

which is good. And herein all faithful members of the Church may thank God and take courage, even in troublous times. Her ministers may not fear, though it may seem as if Jesus was asleep, as if He hid His face and would not behold; they may take courage when they see the wicked in great prosperity, and Satan ruling over the hearts of many, and holding them in ignorance and sin. Yet still the storm has its lessons specially for them. It teaches them to be up and doing, to ply the oars, to trim the sails, to take good heed to the rudder, to cry aloud to the Captain of their salvation, and thus to do their part to make the vessel weather the storm. But when they have done all that they can, it teaches them to leave the result in the hands of God; it teaches them to expect a favourable issue—an issue which will make the glory of God apparent. 2. We, the members of the Church of Christ, are also sailing over the stormy main. We have our peculiar difficulties and trials, each one his own: sometimes secular trials, sometimes spiritual trials. In either case we find that the ocean of our life is not always calm: there are storms and tempests in it, there are fierce and sudden gusts, and sometimes we may almost have despaired and thought that our vessel was ready to sink. Have we in such a case been tempted to cry, "Lord, carest Thou not that we perish?" The earnest Christian will have ever found, sooner or later, an answer of peace.—*W. S. Simpson, M.A.*

*Safety in Christ.*—Whether sinner or saint, unbeliever or believer, we are alike voyaging upon the sea of life. Perils abound in shoal and reef. Dangers gather and threaten in tempest and billow. The storm is stronger, the sea is mightier, than we. Our open boat—a frail craft—will be crushed and sunken in the dark night and black waters, unless the Master speaks the word of peace and brings the calm. In Him is safety. In Him only is life. He cares for us with infinite mercy. We will go to Him

reposing on His might and trusting in His love.

*Christ yields* to the cry of an imperfect faith, and so strengthens it. If He did not, what would become of any of us? He does not quench the dimly burning wick, but tends it and feeds it with oil—by His inward gifts and by His answers to prayer—till it burns up clear and smokeless, a faith without fear. Even smoke needs but a higher temperature to flame; and fear which is mingled with faith needs but a little more heat to be converted into radiance of trust.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*Self-possession.*—Well were it for men if, in life's trials, larger measures of the mastery of self-possession were enjoyed. It can be cultivated. The conscious resting of the soul on God inspires and strengthens it. That helps it to possess and guide instead of being possessed and driven. It converts tyrants into useful servants. Self-possessed utterance and action nerve. The disjointed ones of despair spread paralysis. The former would thus greatly help people either to act more efficiently or endure more heroically.—*W. M. Campbell.*

*The duty of resistance.*—Some pious people resign themselves much too passively to the mischiefs of the material universe, supposing that troubles which are not of their own making must needs be a Divine infliction, calling only for submission. But God sends oppositions to be conquered as well as burdens to be borne; and even before the Fall the world had to be subdued. And our final mastery over the surrounding universe was expressed when Jesus our Head rebuked the winds and stilled the waves.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*Christ in the storm.*—St. Augustine, who knew as well as most men what the storms of temptation are, and better than most men what the deliverance is, and by whom the victory comes, often in his writings refers to this passage of the Evangelist, and those Psalms like the 46th and 93rd and 107th, where we almost seem to hear the roaring of the waters and the

voice of God above them. In one of these he sums up the practical application of the miracle in language that cannot be bettered: "We are sailing in this life as through a sea, and the wind rises and storms of temptations are not wanting. Whence is this, save because Jesus is sleeping in thee? If He were not sleeping in thee thou wouldst have calm within. But what means this, that Jesus is sleeping in thee, save that thy faith, which is from Jesus, is slumbering in thine heart? What shalt thou do to be delivered? Arouse Him and say, Master, we perish. He will awaken—that is, thy faith will return to thee and abide with thee always. When Christ is awakened, though the tempest *beat into* yet it will not *fill* thy ship; thy faith will now command the winds and the waves, and the danger will be over."

Ver. 40. *Responsible for faith.*—Christ treats the disciples as responsible for the defectiveness of their faith. Christians may live on so low a level as to be affected by influences which depress their energies, and render them liable to many faults and shortcomings, which, although not fastening guilt upon the conscience, are in the aggregate a serious evil. The kindness of Christ does not degenerate into indulgence, by shielding His delinquent disciples from the reproof they merited. The reproach which they alleged against Him of not caring for them was groundless and irreverent. He reproaches them in return, but in a different spirit, not by way of retaliation, but because the necessities of the case required it. He chides them, not for disturbing His rest, but for harbouring fears that disturbed their own souls.—*J. H. Morgan.*

*The faithless reproof.*—Consider this reproof as addressed to—1. Men commanded to receive Christ, which is the case of all who hear the gospel. If He had not told you to go over to the other side, away from this world, as your home and portion, then there might be ground of fear that attempt-



ing to do so you might fail and perish in the storm of this world's opposition; but He has said, "Go over to the other side," yea, "Come over," for He will be with you, and hence to tremble and hesitate and doubt is wicked distrust of Him. 2. Those who shrink from Christian duty. (1) They who withhold themselves from open profession. (2) They who lag behind in the path of spiritual progress, and who, instead of stirring themselves up, groan and despond. (3) They who take a dark view of the prospects of the Ark of God and of Christian work. 3. Such as are disposed to faint in time of trial.—*D. Merson.*

Ver. 41. "*What manner of man is this?*"—This is the question for every individual, for every age, to consider. Christ is the great problem of history, of theology, of life. What is He? He is man; but what *manner* of man? He is more than mature, more than the sum-total of its powers. We do not exhaust Him when we say He is a man, nor when we say He is *the* man, standing at the head of the race by virtue of pre-eminent gifts. *He is the God-man, who stands equal with God on the high level of Deity, and equal with man on the low level of humanity.*—*J. Hughes.*

#### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 2. *Christ's parables* differ from all others in this, that in their application they seem inexhaustible. Just as one may, from Geneva, watch the sun setting on Mont Blanc, and while the sunny peak in its gigantic outlines remains ever the same, yet the rays of the sun, as they fall upon it at different angles, so change its marvellous tints that at one moment it sparkles like burnished gold, at another it is bathed in roseate hues, and then again, as the sun sinks beneath the western hills, it stands out in cold, grey tones, in grand relief against the glories of the azure sky,—so with our Lord's parables, while the outline of the familiar story remains always the same, yet every time we come to its contemplation in the light of the Holy Spirit, not only do we see new beauties, but new lessons, I had almost said new truths!—*A. G. Mortimer, D.D.*

*The Ruler of the storm.*—Dr. Liddon, speaking of political opposition to Christianity, says: "During the first three centuries, and finally under Julian, the heathen state made repeated and desperate attempts to suppress it by force. Statesmen and philosophers undertook the task of eradicating it. . . . More than once they drove it from the army, from the professions, from the public thoroughfares, into secrecy; they pursued it into the vaults beneath the palaces of Rome, into the catacombs, into the deserts. . . . The hordes which shattered the work of the Cæsars learnt to repeat the Catholic creed, and a new order of things had formed itself when the tempest of Mohammedanism broke upon Christendom. Politically speaking, this was perhaps the most threatening storm through which the Christian Church passed. . . . The last trial of the Church was the first French Revolution . . . which for a while seemed to threaten its total suppression. Yet the men of the Terror have passed, as the Cæsars had passed before them; and, like the Cæsars, they have only proved to the world that the Church carries within her One who rules the fierce tempests in which human institutions are wont to perish."

*The parables of Jesus* are simple in structure and for the most part easily understood. And yet they are deep as His Divine Spirit. Their inimitable perfections appear as often as any one tries to parallel them. Meeting with Dr. Robert Breckinridge, "Tom" Marshall, the Kentucky orator, asked, "Why do you not imitate your Model, and preach in parables?" "Because I cannot make them." "Why," said the politician, "they are perfectly simple; I could write parables." "Then," answered Dr. Breckinridge, "bring one of your own at our next meeting." When next they met, and Mr. Marshall was reminded of the parable, he said, "I am beaten. No man can make a parable any more than he can make a speech like Jesus."

*The spirit in which to study nature.*—By studying nature in the spirit of meek devo-

tion and solemn love, a good man may indeed "walk up and down the world as in a garden of spices, and draw a Divine sweetness out of every flower."—*J. Keble.*

*What we can see in nature.*—There is in nature just as much, or as little, as the soul of each beholder can see in her.—*J. G. Shairp, LL.D.*

*Nature leads to God.*—Nature represents the Soul from which all souls come, and by its beautifulness helps us to delight ourselves in God. He leads us to no dead museum or stony cathedral, but under the dome of the sky. He says, "The whole is alive, full of God's life."—*John Pulsford.*

*Nature a mirror.*—To a man under the influence of emotion, nature is ever a great mirror full of emotions. To the satiated and quiescent alone, she is a cold, dead window for the outward world.—*J. P. Richter.*

*Nature a print of God.*—The heavens are a print from the pen of God's perfection; the world is a bud from the flower of His beauty; the sun is a spark from the light of His wisdom, and the ocean is a bubble on the sea of His power.—*From the Persian.*

*A story helps the truth.*—"The story," as Dr. Guthrie says, "like a float, keeps the truth from sinking; like a nail, fastens it in the mind; like the feathers of an arrow, makes it strike; and, like the barb, makes it stick."

*Parable a mode of conveying truth.*—A parable is Christ's mode of conveying His mind into ours—the waggon in which He puts deep thoughts, not apparent or necessary at the time, but useful for the Christian Church when out of its infancy.

*Ver. 9, Ears to hear.*—All men for the most part have both their ears, but not to hear. The man sick of the gout hath both his feet, but not to walk. He that is purblind hath both his eyes, but not to see clearly. He that is manacled by the magistrate for some fault hath both his hands; but so long as they are bound they cannot do their office. So most men have ears; but few men have ears to hear—namely, to hear that which is good, and to hear that which is good well.—*Dean Boys.*

*Best to have no left ear.*—In listening to God it is as well that we have no left ear. True, we are commanded to use both ears—"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"; but this takes it for granted that both ears are right ones. Now, morally speaking, there is a right ear and there is a left ear; and he has both who, in listening to the gospel, takes it in by the one ear and lets it out again by the other. It is *right* to admit the sound, but it is *left*, or wrong, to allow it to escape so soon. In this sense it is best to have no left ear. The most profitable way is to put the right ear to the gospel trumpet,

and, as the joyful sound enters, to let it drop at once down into the heart, from whence it will not arise to depart. This right ear is just faith in the Word; and he who believes what God says, not only hears rightly, but never loses what is heard. In such an one the Word of the Lord abideth for ever.

*The gospel to be heard.*—In the reign of James II. that king commanded an Act of Parliament, called the "Liberty of Conscience Act," to be read in all the churches. The clergy were very unwilling to read it, and some of their congregations did not wish to hear it. One Sunday a clergyman, when the time came for reading the document, said to his congregation: "Though I am compelled to *read* this, you are not compelled to *hear* it," upon which the people rose up and left the church, and the clergyman read the Act of Parliament to the pews, hassocks, and walls. But we may not thus treat the gospel. This is God's message to our souls; and while true ministers are indeed compelled by the Spirit of God to speak the Word to us, we too should feel that we are compelled to listen to it with reverence and attention because it is a message from God.

*Worthless hearing.*—One day a very clever countryman, named Jedediah Buxton, who could multiply nine figures by nine figures without a slate or paper, went to see Garrick, a famous actor, perform upon the stage of a theatre. When he went home from London to his native village, and was asked what he thought of the acting of Garrick, he replied, "Oh, I don't know; I only saw a little man strut about the stage and repeat seven thousand nine hundred and fifty-six words." Instead of listening to what was said, he had been counting the speaker's words. More foolish is it for us to come to hear the Word of God and then amuse ourselves by noticing something that is beside the mark.

*Hearing.*—Give but interest in the theme, and the listener's ear fulfils its natural function, that of hearing. "Mine ears hast Thou opened." Intensity the interest, and the listener is all ears, all ear. Webster's ill-starred Duchess of Malfi assures her brother, "I will plant my soul in my ears to hear you." "Alarmed nature starts up in my heart, and opens a thousand ears to listen," cries Colonel Talbot in an old play. Perplexed in the extreme, and cut to the heart, by a revelation of household treachery and wrong, an incredulous husband is described in a modern romance, with his hands clasped together, and with his head bent to catch every syllable of the harrowing news—listening "as if his whole being were resolved into that one sense of hearing." It is with hearing as with seeing. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. Mendelssohn, in one of his letters from abroad, rapturous with gazing on his favourite Titian, declares that "one might

well wish for a dozen more eyes to look one's fill at such a picture." "Had I three ears I'd hear thee," exclaims Macbeth, when summoned to attend by the apparition of an Armed Head, in the witches' cave. D'Artagnan, in the ante-chamber of M. de Treville, is described as looking with all his eyes and listening with all his ears, stretching his five senses so as to lose nothing. The same author tells how Mazarin listened, dying as he was, to Anne of Austria, as ten living men could not have listened. "Will you listen?" asks a prince in the same story; and is answered, "Can you ask me? You speak of a matter of life or death to me, and then ask if I will listen!"

Vers. 11, 12. *The door kept open.*—In Mrs. Whitney's story *Odd or Even?* she gives the following ingenious interpretation of a declaration which has puzzled many people (Matt. xiii. 13-16). It is given in a conversation between Mr. Kingsworth, her ideal minister, and Philip Merriweather, a young man of sceptical tendencies. "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. . . . Lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them," quoted Mr. Kingsworth again. "That is the heart of the Healer, waiting for them that shall fall down from their mountain." But Flip was still only climbing his mountain. He was pleased at every clutch and foothold he got, that seemed to lift him higher. "And yet the fog is put there on purpose! it says so." The boy did not dare to say "Ha,"—"lest" they should see, and understand—and the rest of it! That's just the way. Why couldn't it be plain, if it meant to be?" "Suppose you fasten the door, at night, 'lest' any unauthorised person should come in?" "Well, I do exactly that," said Flip, wondering what it justified in respect of a door that he was contending should be freely open. "And suppose you leave it unlocked, 'lest' your brother should come home at midnight?" Whether he was puzzled, or whether he began to see, Flip made no answer. "Don't you see there are two 'lests'—a providing against, and a providing for?" asked the minister. "Take those words with the second 'lest.' 'I speak these things to them in parables; I put them away, in their memory, as in My creation; so that they may see, even without perceiving, and hear, even if they cannot understand: in case that at any time they should see with their spiritual eyes, and hear with their spiritual ears, and understand with the very heart of them, and be converted, and I should heal them.' Isn't the waiting there, in those words?" "You have altered a good many

of them." "I have chosen between those two 'lests,'" said Mr. Kingsworth. "That interpreted all the sentence, which I tried to translate, not change. Because, otherwise, how do they agree with those different words: 'I am come unto you, that you might have life'; and, 'I came to call the sinners'?"

*No spiritual impression.*—In a room glazed with yellow glass the photographer would get heat and light from the sunshine, but he could not produce a photograph, because yellow glass, while it lets in the light and heat of the sun, keeps out the chemical or actinic ray necessary to produce a portrait. And so it is true of many that, while they live in the free light and warmth of the gospel day, while the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world shines upon and all around them, they are not savingly changed, they are not transformed by the light into the image of God. And the reason of this is that they have a yellow spot in their spiritual eye, and live, as it were, in a house of yellow glass. They get the light and the heat of the gospel, but not its renewing power. Their eye is not single, and therefore their whole body is not full of light. The medium in which they live and move and have their being is unfavourable to spiritual impressions, and therefore they are not spiritually impressed.

Ver. 12. *Does God harden hearts?*—Suppose two merchant vessels out on the same sea, sailing before the same wind, which comes prosperously on their quarter. Suddenly upon one of them a mutiny is organised; the captain is murdered, and the crew put in irons; then the captors turn on their course exactly, face in the opposite direction, and start for some desolate pirates' isle, where they may beach their stolen cargo in safety. The same wind which drives the honest ship along now drives the wicked one too, and so it helps in the crime. But all it really does to help it is—to keep blowing on. God never does anything to harden a heart which would not soften it if properly received.

Ver. 14. *Sowing the Word.*—Doubt not, but earnestly believe, that if "long sleeps the summer in the seed," the summer is in the seed, if the seed sown by you is indeed the Word of God; and even now it may be shining and ripening in many a changed heart passed far out of your reach and ken. The sailor keeping watch on the midnight sea, praying as he watches; the miner toiling for gold in some Queensland gully, and thinking of the better treasure in the heavenly country towards which, by words of yours, his feet are moving; the shepherd among the wooded valleys of New Zealand,



saying over to himself the Shepherd's Psalm taught him by you; the settler's wife in some rude cabin on the Pacific slope, training her children as you trained her, may, without your knowing it, have found the Pearl of great price, which, but for you, they would never have found; through you, also, may be helping others to find it.—*Bishop Thorold.*

*Vitality of the Word.*—The Word has all the hidden vitality of a seed. Take up a grain of wheat and examine it; ask yourself where its life lies. Certainly not on the surface; nor yet in its inner compartments, so far as our senses can detect. Chemistry will inform you as to every material element it contains, and leave you as far as ever from knowing or seeing the very thing that makes it a seed—that mysterious something we call its life. Within that little mass of matter there lies a force which sun, rain, and soil shall call forth with voices it will hear and obey. God hath given it a body, and to every seed a body of its own. The hidden life and unwearied force of the wheat-grain furnish analogies to the Word of God. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. It is an eternal seed, to which God has given eternal form; but its vitality is not lodged where we can see and analyse it.

*Vers. 15-19. Three kinds of unprofitable hearers.*—There are three different kinds of hearers of the Word,—those like a *sponge*, that suck up good and bad together, and let both run out immediately; those like a *sand-glass*, that let what enters in at one ear pass out at the other, hearing without thinking; those like a *strainer*, letting go the good and retaining the bad.

*Thought dissipated.*—Have you ever seen grain scattered on the road? The sparrow from the housetop and the chickens from the barn rush in, and within a minute after it has been scattered not the shadow of a grain is left. This is the picture, not of thought crushed by degrees, but of thought dissipated, and no man can tell how or when it went. Swiftly do these winged thoughts come when we pray, or read, or listen; in our inattentive, sauntering, wayside hours; and, before we can be upon guard, the very trace of holier purposes has disappeared. In our purest moods, when we kneel to pray, or gather round the altar, down into the very Holy of Holies sweep these foul birds of the air, villain fancies, demon thoughts. The germ of life, the small seed of impression, is gone—where, you know not. But it is gone. Inattentiveness of spirit, produced by want of spiritual interest, is the first cause of disappointment.—*F. W. Robertson.*

*The trodden heart.*—There was an old legend of a goblin horseman that galloped over men's fields at night; and wherever his

foot struck, the soil was so blasted that nothing would ever grow on it again. So is it with the heart over which the beastly feet of lust, sensuality, greed, selfishness, passion, are allowed to tread. The heart is never the same again.

*Hardened by evangelical teaching.*—Speaking of a certain place in which he conducted a mission, the Rev. W. Haslam says: "It was certainly a very difficult place, for the congregation had been hardened with over-much evangelical teaching of a general kind. Seed had been abundantly sown without any due preparation of the ground. It was amazing to witness the hardness of the people, and their unwillingness to yield."

*No refuge from the storm.*—Some years ago two undergraduates went up one of the highest mountains in Switzerland. They would not have a guide. They said they had been there before, and they feared nothing. Their friends watched them with their telescopes, and saw them reach the top, and then came a storm of snow which lasted a week. Nobody could reach them, and they never came down alive. When found, they were close to a track by which, if they had had a guide, they could have come down in safety when the snow first fell. So it is that many a proud philosopher of our time, resting on reason and his own conceit, climbs the highest steep of learning; then comes the storm, the icy hand of Death is on his shoulder, and he knows not where to turn, because he has forsaken the Guide of his youth, the Light and Life of men!

*Unpromising, but not hopeless.*—Many years ago my friend Colonel Boyd, of Wytheville, Virginia, gave to a Frenchman, by the name of Hartmann, a rocky hillside. Everywhere the hard, blue limestone protruded. A more unpromising garden could not be imagined. In the spring the warmth and moisture made the hillside green for a little while, but the first drought scorched it dry and brown. But Hartmann worked away, patiently, perseveringly, systematically. He dug out the rocks, he deepened the soil, he irrigated from the neighbouring brook. Years passed, and the "Frenchman's Garden," as everybody called it, was the most beautiful, the most picturesque, the most fruitful, the most profitable garden in all that part of Virginia. So, after all, that peculiar kind of human hearts which the Lord described as "stony places" are not absolutely hopeless. These shallow hearts may be deepened. This sentimental religion may be enriched. The Word of God may be cultivated until it grows to be a fruitful plant in even these unpromising lives. From being a mere enthusiasm, or a dead orthodoxy, religion may become a life, a deep-rooted life, a life hid with Christ in God.—*R. S. Barrett.*

*Fugitive impressions.*—When Daguerre was working at his sun-pictures his great diffi-

culty was to fix them. The light came and imprinted the image; but when the tablet was drawn from the camera, the image had vanished. Our lamentation is like this; our want the same—a fixing solution which shall arrest and detain the fugitive impressions. He discovered the chemical power which turned the evanescent into the durable. There is a Divine agency at hand that can fix the truth upon the heart of man—God's Holy Spirit.

Ver. 17. *Want of root.*—Men have no root in themselves. That is the best account that I can give of the vast failure of our systems of general education. I am not thinking of elementary schools merely, but of all schools. They are able to produce a certain measure of success. In the fairly good schools boys and girls learn something, and sometimes a good deal. Eighty, ninety, and ninety-five per cent. of the scholars in our common schools, under energetic and able teachers, read fairly, write fairly, become fairly successful in arithmetic. In schools of a higher class they will learn something of Greek and Latin grammar, and they can make a fair show in arithmetic. But though the teaching may not be mechanical, there is something mechanical in the result, and in a few years after they have left school it is quite clear that the mind of an immense proportion of those who have been taught is dead; it does not grow. We discover that large numbers of those who have passed through the schools have never grasped for themselves, as the roots of a tree grasp the soil, any subject that sustains intellectual activity. The mischief is not merely that they have forgotten much that they learned; that cannot be helped. I am not sure that we ought to cherish any wish that it should be helped. I remember meeting an eminent man not long ago who was a high Wrangler at Cambridge, and he said he was thankful that he had forgotten most of the mathematics he knew when he took his degree. I do not complain that what was learned has been forgotten, but that there is nothing, no science, no history, no province of speculation or of art in which large numbers of those who have received an early education have a real, personal, enduring interest. One of the first objects of every wise teacher should be to get the mind of his pupils to strike root into something, it does not much matter what, but something that will stimulate and maintain intellectual activity. When once that miracle is wrought, and the mind has a root of its own, the great work of the educationist is done. Take another illustration. How many men succeed in maintaining a fairly excellent character, because they are sheltered from moral peril by the circumstances that environ them, and supported in well-doing by the general opinion of those

with whom they are most intimately associated! Let the circumstances change, place them among men with a lower sense of honour, with less ideas of honesty and of truthfulness, place them in circumstances in which it will look safe to violate some of the laws which they now honour, and what will become of them then? If the moral opinion of society is to be sound, there must be men who give an ethical law to others, and do not merely receive it from others—men with an ethical idea of their own, to which they are loyal at all costs, men who have discovered eternal laws which they must obey whatever comes of their obedience. Such men have a root in themselves; they are not to be bribed into wrong-doing by the promise of wealth or of honour; they are not to be terrified into virtue by the penalties of law or by the fear of loss of property or of social position. They are faithful because the law that has been revealed to them is too august to be broken.—*R. W. Dale, D.D.*

Vers. 18, 19. *The Word choked.*—What an illustration of this the speech which a dying, despairing man addressed to one under whose ministry he had sat for twenty years! "I have never," he cried, "heard a single sermon!" The minister, to whom his face was quite familiar, who had known him for years as a regular attendant at church, looked astonished, fancied he was raving under the delirium of his approaching end. No, not at all! The man was in his sad and sober senses. "I attended church," he exclaimed, "but my habit was, so soon as you began the sermon, to begin a review of last week's trade, and to anticipate and arrange the business of the next." Now, in like manner, to a greater or less extent, Satan deals with thousands who occupy pews in the church.

*Good impressions destroyed.*—Robert Burns—who had times of serious reflexion, in one of which, as recorded by his own pen, he beautifully compares himself, in the review of his past life, to a lonely man walking amid the ruins of a noble temple, where pillars stand dismantled of their capitals, and elaborate works of purest marble lie on the ground, overgrown by tall, foul, rank weeds—was once brought, as I have heard, under deep convictions. He was in great alarm. The seed of the Word had begun to grow. He sought counsel from one called a minister of the gospel. Alas that in that crisis of his history he should have trusted the helm to the hands of such a pilot! This so-called minister laughed at the poet's fears—bade him dance them away at balls, drown them in bowls of wine, fly from these phantoms to the arms of pleasure. Fatal, too pleasant advice! He followed it: and "the lusts of other things" entering in, choked the Word.

*Strangled.*—In the gardens of Hampton Court you will see many trees entirely van-

quished and well-nigh strangled by huge coils of ivy, which are wound about them like the snakes around the unhappy Laocoon; there is no untwisting the folds, they are too giant-like, and fast fixed, and every hour the rootlets of the climber are sucking the life out of the unhappy tree. Yet there was a day when the ivy was a tiny aspirant, only asking a little aid in climbing; had it been denied then the tree had never become its victim; but by degrees the humble weakling grew in strength and arrogance, and at last it assumed the mastery, and the tall tree became the prey of the creeping, insinuating destroyer. The moral is too obvious. Sorrowfully do we remember many noble characters which have been ruined little by little by insinuating habits. Covetousness, drink, the love of pleasure, and pride, have often been the ivy that has wrought the ruin.

*Blinded by self-interest.*—Many a man of influence and position is blinded by the interests that absorb his thought. From the summit of East Rock in New Haven there is a magnificent view. The city has wisely taken the place as a public park, and now its paths are daily thronged with pilgrims to that shrine of beauty. But on that rock has been found a counterfeiter's cave. The time was when those were on the hill who cared nothing for the wondrous view, but whose only desire was to hide themselves in the cave to pursue a nefarious business. So long as they were there the glories of the out-stretching valley and the distant sea were unseen by them. It is just such a difficulty that hinders men from seeing the loveliness of Christ. They are busy in caves of worldliness. They see nothing because they keep themselves where they cannot see.

Ver. 20. *Receptiveness.*—"Receive" is the one word that describes the healthful conduct of human life. We receive being at birth; we do nothing but receive for the months that follow—receive mother-milk, clothing, warmth, care. The lad receives protection, advice, and wisdom, if indeed he does receive; for, rejecting these, he rejects his destiny, to find out his own way, which is death. We receive pickaxe and pen, and our place in the world. Old men smile, as they hear proud youth talk of "hewing a way" or "winning a way" through life to fortune, as if there could be any path discovered or cut out that was not hard-beaten like a Broadway by the thousands who have trodden it before us. In all honourable vocations the road is Patience, Industry, Frugality, Knowledge. And, if one go higher, Repentance, the New Heart through Christ, and the common gate to heaven. The youth makes his experiment. At times he seems to be hewing, winning, and inventing; but afterwards reviewing, he perceives

he was but lifting up a hewing hand to cut away the obstacles to his receiving. As when one bursts a prison wall, or emerges toilfully from a wood, he has but to receive the down-pouring sun. Old age testifies, "All my battles have in fact been against Self, that I might not reject, against Others that I might not be defrauded of, the good which God meant me to receive."—*E. J. Haynes.*

Vers. 21, 22. *The Christian's light.*—This statement of Christ's is well illustrated by the story of the Calais lighthouse keeper, who, when boasting of the brilliancy of his lamp, was asked what would happen if it were allowed to go out, or if the reflectors became dim. "Impossible," he replied, "for yonder, where nothing can be seen by us, there are ships sailing to every harbour of the sea; if to-night I failed in my duty, some one might be shipwrecked. No; I like to think that the eyes of the whole world are fixed on my light." This man could appreciate what Christ taught His disciples when He said that they were to be like Safford, the city set upon a hill which could not be hid, and to remember that, inasmuch as they were the light of the world, they must shine before men.

*Influence.*—A man once said, "I have no more influence than a farthing rushlight." "Well," was the reply, "a farthing rushlight can do a good deal: it can set a haystack on fire; it can burn down a house—yea, more, it will enable a poor creature to read a chapter out of God's Book. Go your way, friend; let your farthing rushlight so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

*A good life.*—Julius Drusus, a Roman tribune, had a house so situated that several of its apartments lay exposed to the view of the neighbourhood. A person came to him, and offered for five talents so to alter it as that it should not be liable to that inconvenience. "I will give thee ten talents," said Drusus, "if thou canst make my house conspicuous in every room of it, so that all the city may behold in what manner I lead my life."

Ver. 22. *Hidden, to be revealed.*—Many things are concealed, both in nature and by art, though the concealment is by no means designed to be permanent. Look, e.g., at the almost measureless beds of coal, hidden for ages in the bowels of the earth, but designed by Providence to be revealed when necessity should arise. The precise time for the unveiling it is not always easy to decide, because man's knowledge is finite, but we rest assured that it will coincide with the need for its use. It is a principle worth bearing in mind when human efforts fail; for it is encourag-



ing to know that such a result may be due simply to the fact that we have tried unconsciously to anticipate the fore-appointed time.—*Dean Luckock.*

Ver. 24. *No loss by giving away.*—During the summer a clergyman called on a lady who had a very fine collection of roses. She took him out to see them and began plucking right and left. Some bushes with but a single flower she despoiled. The clergyman remonstrated, "You are robbing yourself, dear madam." "Ah," she said, "do you not know that the way to make the rosebush bear is to pluck its flowers freely? I lose nothing by what I give away." This is a universal law. We never lose anything by what we give away.

*Influences of evil.*—Sir Peter Lely made it a rule never to look at a bad picture, having found by experience that, whenever he did so, his pencil took a taint from it. "Apply this," adds Bishop Horne, "to bad books and bad company." Lord Collingwood, writing to a young friend, said, "Hold it as a maxim that you had better be alone than in mean company, for the worth of a man will always be ruled by that of his company." The converse of course is only true, for nothing is of greater value than the influence of good surroundings and noble friends. The Persian poet Saadi has a lyric in which a clod of clay is asked how it has come to smell so sweet. The clay replies, "The sweetness is not in myself, but I have been lying in contact with a rose."

Ver. 25. *The law of compensation.*—We see in some office two or three young men. They seem to be of equal abilities, but one has a small fortune bequeathed him. On this account, when a partnership is vacant, the opening is offered to him. By-and-by some public appointment is vacant; because this man is possessed of some wealth he is thought to be a responsible man, and so is chosen. "To him that hath shall be given." This is the ordinary way in which things work in the world around us. But observe that the same rule exhibits its sway in the spiritual world. Here is a man with a very little knowledge of religion, who has been, perhaps, much neglected in his youth, but he has some idea of God's greatness and power, and that it is his duty to go to church. In the house of God he comes under good influences, and his conscience is enlightened. He becomes a regular attendant, and then a communicant. "To him that hath shall be given." Or let the other part of the saying be taken up. There is a child who gets some slight knowledge of the facts of Christianity in a Sunday-school class, but that knowledge is very slight, for the child is restless and careless, and disinclined to listen to anything which requires

attention. Soon the lad goes to work for his bread, and thinks himself too much of a man to go any longer to Sunday school. The little learning he received soon fades away, and from want of practice even the half-learned art of reading is lost. He goes now and then to church, but is ashamed to be unable to read as others do around. And so at length, though living in a Christian land, he becomes as ignorant and indifferent as a heathen. "From him that hath not," etc. A young man begins to feel, as he grows up, the Divine life stirring within him. He wants to do something to help in efforts for good around him, to take his share in bearing burdens. But he goes into business or enters a profession or devotes himself to society, and by degrees all the pulses of Divine life beat more slowly; he loses an aspiration here—he loses a scruple there—he makes an excuse about that; and his life begins to dwindle, and, after a bit, he becomes like a bicycle going downhill—the law of accelerated motion asserts itself, and in the day of trial or of opportunity he is found wanting and useless. "From him that hath not," etc. If only he had taken up some little bit of self-denying work, if only he had given himself to one thing in which he could help others, if only he had had the self-forgetting element within him, then in him too the law "to him that hath shall be given" would have asserted itself—he would have been saved in the truest sense.—*R. Eytton.*

*Service no loss.*—An eminent merchant of St. Petersburg supported, at his own expense, a number of missionaries in India. Some one asked him how he could afford to do so, to which he replied, "Before my conversion, when I served the world and self, I did it on a grand scale and at the most lavish expense; and when Christ called me out of darkness, I resolved that He should have more than I had ever given the world. At my conversion I promised I would give a certain per cent. of what my business brought me. Since that time it yields double as much." So it is in our service for Christ. God never allows any capital to lay idle, and, if we do not use the talent given us, He takes it, and gives it to him who will use it. How often do we see poor, lean Christians fretting and fuming and praying for more faith and more strength, when they sit still and will not use what they have!

*The treasure only for the pure.*—There is an old church in Germany with which a singular legend is connected. In this church, at certain times, a mighty treasure is said to become visible to mortal eyes. Gold and silver vessels, of great magnificence and in great abundance, are disclosed; but only he who is free from sin can hope to secure the precious vessels. This legend

shadows a great truth. In the temple of God, in the Word of God, are riches beyond gem or gold; but only the sincere, the pure in purpose, can hope to realise the Divine treasure. There must be in the truth-seeker a moral susceptibility and passion for the light.

*Moral increase.*—There is an Eastern allegory which teaches the same lesson as this parable. A merchant, going abroad for a time, gave respectively to two of his friends two sacks of wheat each, to take care of against his return. Years passed; he came back, and applied for them again. The first took him into his storehouse, and shewed them to him; but they were mildewed and worthless. The other led him out into the open country, and pointed out field after field of waving corn, the produce of the two sacks given him. Said the merchant, "You have been a faithful friend; give me two sacks of that wheat; the rest shall be thine."

Vers. 26, 27. *Fruit in after-days.*—An old man was once at work in the field, his mind occupied only with things of this world. Suddenly his thoughts wandered back to his early days, and he remembered how on one occasion the minister, before pronouncing the parting blessing, had paused, and reminded the ungodly that upon them no blessing would rest, but the wrath of God instead. The remembrance of that solemn warning—uttered seventy years before—filled the old man's heart with terror, and led him to seek the Lord with all his heart. Thus the words disregarded at fifteen saved at eighty-five, long after the speaker had passed away from the ministry of earth.

*Christian growth imperceptible.*—It is the work of a long life to become a Christian. Many, oh! many a time are we tempted to say, "I make no progress at all. 'Tis only failure after failure; nothing grows." Now look at the sea when the flood is coming in. Go and stand by the sea-beach, and you will think that the ceaseless flux and reflux is but retrogression equal to the advance. But look again in an hour's time, and the whole ocean has advanced. Every advance has been beyond the last, and every retrograde movement has been an imperceptible trifle less than the last. This is *progress*, to be estimated at the end of hours, not minutes. And this is *Christian* progress. Many a fluctuation, many a backward motion, with a rush at times so vehement that all seems lost. But if the eternal work be real, every failure has been a real gain, and the next does not carry us so far back as we were before. Every advance is a real gain, and part of it is never lost. Both when we advance and when we fail, we gain. We are nearer to God than we were.

Ver. 28. *Slumbering seeds.*—A gentleman

tore down an outbuilding that had stood for many years in his yard. He smoothed over the ground, and left it. The warm spring rains fell upon it, and the sunshine flooded it; and soon there sprang up multitudes of little flowers, unlike any growing in the neighbourhood. Where the building had stood was once a garden, and the seeds had lain in the soil without moisture, light, or warmth all the years. So soon as the sunshine and the rain touched them, they sprang up into life and beauty. So oftentimes the seeds of truth lie long in a human heart, growing not, because the light and warmth of the Holy Spirit are shut away from them by sin and unbelief; but after long years the heart is opened in some way to the heavenly influences, and the seeds, living still, shoot up into beauty. The instructions of a pious mother may lie in a heart, fruitless, from childhood to old age, and yet at last be the means of saving the soul.

*The law of gradual advance.*—No nation comes to eminence in character, and to a corresponding supremacy in position, without many and painful preparatory processes. There is "first the blade, then the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear." First, naturally, come the means of subsistence; then, conveniences; then, elegancies; and only after long and still-advancing struggle the great achievement of a perfected civilisation. The cavern, or the cabin; then, the house; then, the village; and afterward the city, with palaces and piers, and consecrating temples. The spoken word, and the spontaneous song; then, literature in its permanence; and not till long afterward that literature in its various and copious departments, of eloquence, science, philosophy, poetry, and the history which includes and perpetuates all these. First, industry; then, art. First, hollow logs, and timorous barks; and afterward great ships, that spread their wings on every wind, or made the seas to pause and throb as the pulsating energy thunders above them. First, a tribe; and then—when years and generations have passed, when soldiers have fought, and statesmen have planned, when religions have diffused their spirit through society, and reciprocating industries have knit together, when homes have been established, and families have been organised, and parents have transmitted their qualities to their children—then a great, enlightened, and peaceful commonwealth, rich in all manhood, replete with resources, and inwardly compacted in vital union: this is the method of all civilisation; this is the history of nations.

Vers. 31, 32. *Great things from small.*—Many great histories of blessing may be traced back to a very small seed. A woman whose name is forgotten dropped a tract or

little book in the way of a man named Richard Baxter. He picked it up and read it, and it led him to Christ. He became a man of saintly life, and wrote a book entitled *A Call to the Unconverted*, which brought many persons to the Saviour, and among others Philip Doddridge. Philip Doddridge in his turn wrote *The Rise and Progress of Religion*, which led many into the kingdom of God, among them the great Wilberforce. Wilberforce wrote *A Practical View of Christianity*, which was the means of saving a multitude, including Legh Richmond. In his turn Richmond wrote *The Dairyman's Daughter*, which has been instrumental in the conversion of thousands. The dropping of that one little tract seemed a very small thing to do; but see what a wonderful, many-branched tree has sprung from it!

*Faith in the power of truth.*—When Charles Darwin wrote his *Origin of Species*, did he believe it would be received by the scientific world? Most certainly he did. But the scientific world, with rare exceptions, received it with a storm of derision and opposition. To others it was the height of unreason. But to him it was not unreasonable. Where was the difference? He knew it best, saw its truth, and therefore had faith in its acceptance, and in some thirty years the scientific world has, in the main, come round to his belief. They who know Christianity best have most faith in its power to upheave the world. It still requires a great deal of faith to believe that the world will actually become a Christian world. This is partly because the world has always been a stiff soil for any kind of noble husbandry. It is slow to yield its produce, and there are some terribly tough roots to be stubbed up. It is partly because of imperfection in the means employed. But God works by imperfect means, or how would He use men at all? He wins His victories with maimed soldiers. The workmen have all manner of crotchets of their own, and all manner of ridiculous notions of the shape of the building, and a nice piece of architecture it would be if all their structures were to stand; but the Divine Architect has His plan matured in heavenly wisdom, and He will look to it with sleepless eye that the New Jerusalem keeps its symmetry. What one man with a crotchet has built awry or with perishable material, He sends another man with an opposite crotchet to pull down, and, as there is a little bit of right work in every worker, He takes that out of him too, and the fair structure rises in impregnable righteousness.—*G. T. Candlin.*

*Seed sown by the tempests.*—Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, when obliged to quit the city in consequence of increasing persecutions, went with one of his disciples to a region in the vicinity. In the cool of

the evening the bishop was walking under the shade of the magnificent trees which stood in front of his rural abode; here he found his disciple sitting under an oak tree, leaning his head upon his hand, and weeping. Then the old man said, "My son, why weepest thou?" The disciple replied, "Shall I not mourn and weep when I think of the kingdom of truth upon earth? Tempests are gathering round it, and will destroy it. Many of its adherents have become apostates, and have denied and abused the truth, proving that unworthy men may confess it with their lips, though their hearts are far from it. This fills my heart with sorrow and my eyes with tears." Then Polycarp smiled and answered, "My son, the kingdom of Divine truth is like unto a tree which a man reared in his garden. He set the seed secretly and quietly in the ground and left it; the seed put forth leaves, and the young tree grew up among weeds and thorns. Soon the tree reared itself above them, and the weeds died, because the shadow of the branches overcame them. The tree grew, and the wind blew on it and shook it, but its roots clung firmer and firmer to the ground, taking hold of the rocks downward, and its branches reached unto heaven. Thus the tempest served to increase the firmness and strength of the tree. When it grew higher, and its shadow spread farther, then the thorns and weeds grew again round the tree, but it heeded them not in its loftiness. There it stood, in calm, peaceful grandeur—a tree of God!"

*Triumph of the gospel.*—Far out in the western main is a little island round which for nearly half the year the Atlantic clangs his angry billows, keeping the handful of inhabitants close prisoners. Most of it is bleak and barren; but there is one little bay rimmed round with silvery sand, and reflecting in its waters a slope of verdure. Towards this bay one autumn evening, thirteen hundred years ago, a rude vessel steered its course. It was a flimsy bark, no better than a huge basket of osiers covered over with the skins of beasts; but the tide was tranquil, and as the boatmen plied their oars they raised the voice of psalms. Skimming across the bay, they beached their coracle and stepped on shore—about thirteen in number. On the green slope they built a few hasty huts and a tiny Christian temple. The freight of that little ship was the gospel, and the errand of the saintly strangers was to tell benighted heathen about Jesus and His love. From the favoured soil of Ireland they had brought a grain of mustard seed, and now they sowed it in Iona. In the conservatory of their little church it thrived, till it was fit to be planted out on the neighbouring mainland. To the Picts with their tattooed faces, to the Druids peeping and muttering in their dismal groves, the missionaries



preached the gospel. That gospel triumphed. The groves were felled, and where once they stood rose the house of prayer. Planted out on the bleak moorland, the little seed became a mighty tree, so that the hills of Caledonia were covered with the shade; nor must Scotland ever forget the seedling of Iona, and the labours of Columba with his meek Culdees.

*The Church's expansion.*—There is a fairy tale which speaks of a magic tent, no bigger than a walnut shell, whose powers were very wonderful. Placed in the king's audience chamber, it expanded into a gorgeous canopy over his throne. Placed in the courtyard, it became a spacious tent, which provided accommodation for the royal household. Placed without the gates, it widened its borders until the plain was covered by a glistening encampment, beneath whose shelter a great army might find ample room. And so it was capable of infinite expansion according to the requirements of its owner. Well, that magic tent may serve as an emblem of the Church of Christ. At first it was only a little one, but with every year it has expanded, and widened its borders, and become more ample and majestic. Multitudes whom no man can number, from every nation under heaven, have sought its shelter. And it shall continue to grow until all the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ.

Ver. 38. *Christ sometimes seems to sleep in our hearts*, as He did in the ship, when temptation assails. It is but to try our faith, for if He be there we are safe. It is recorded of St. Catherine of Siena that, on one occasion, after being subjected to most horrible temptation in thought for several days, during which God seemed to have hidden His face from her, when the temptation, to which she had never consented, had passed away, and she felt again her Lord's presence within her, she said to Him, "O Lord, where wast Thou when I was so tempted?" "In thy heart, My child," was the reply; "if I had not been there, thou wouldst have yielded."

*Safety where Christ is.*—The greatest hero of antiquity, once exposed to the dangers of shipwreck, roused the sinking spirits of his crew by crying aloud amidst the din of the winds and waves, and exclaiming to the helmsman of the vessel, almost ready to desert his charge, "The vessel which carries Cæsar and his fortunes can never sink!" Might not the apostles of the Lord have learnt a lesson even from the heathen conqueror, and applied his words in their truest and highest form?—"The vessel that carries Jesus can never perish!"

*The world in God's hands.*—In the Fiji Islands a man-of-war was overtaken by a storm. The commander, instead of trusting

to the anchor, got up steam and plunged right into the hell of waters that seethed around him. The vessel, after moments of suspense, began to make headway, and soon rose and fell on the waves of the open sea. We, too, are going ahead. We have a tremendous propelling power, not the gates of hell will prevail against it. When a man gets into a moody state about the outlook in the world, he should go and take a night's sleep, and let God look after His own world. What did these fishermen take our Lord for? They forgot; they should have remembered their sailing orders, which were bound to be carried out.

*The winds in God's hands.*—A coasting vessel was caught in a trap on the east coast of Scotland. That is a bay, crescent-shaped, in which vessels, in the stress of a storm, take refuge, and are sometimes caught in it. This vessel was beating to get out of the trap. The chances were all against her. As the captain kicked off his sea-boots preparatory to doing battle with the waves, when the boat would founder on the rocks, he thought of his wife, in a neighbouring town, and his little girl. Before the vessel struck he thought of Him who stilled the waves on the Lake of Galilee. He went to his cabin, and he was heard to say, "O God, give us but two points, just two points!" He came on deck, and the wind had shifted just two points. They weathered that strip of land and escaped from the trap into the open sea. Do you believe that? Do you believe that it is God's world, that He holds the winds in His fists, and the waters in the hollow of His hands?

Ver. 41. *"What manner of man?"*—Be it legend or history, the story of royal Cnut on the seashore, forbidding, at his flatterers' instigation, or by his own desire to rebuke their folly, forbidding the farther approach of the incoming tide, is pregnant with instruction. The royal Dane might be a man of men, but the surging waves were not obedient unto his voice. King though he was, the tide was responseless as the deaf adder to any charming of his, charmed he never so wisely, enjoined he never so sternly. What manner of man, then, but the Son of Man? What manner of king but the King of kings? An older king than Cnut, and not a wiser, not only lashed the winds that blew contrary to his will, but bound the sea with fetters, after a sort: "Ipsum compedibus qui vinxerat Ennosigæum." Much good it did him: witness his return from his great expedition, in a poor skiff, wind-tossed across waves red with the blood of his slaughtered host. The stars in their courses once fought against Sisera, and the fettered waves were little more propitious to speed the fortunes of Xerxes,

He might have spared his chains. At any rate he lost his army. Archdeacon Hare practically applied the extravagance of the Great King, as they of Persia were styled, in designating the present (or, rather, what was then the present) as an age when men will scoff at the madness of Xerxes, yet themselves try to fling their chains over the ever-rolling, irrepressible ocean of thought; nay, they will scoop out a mimic sea in their pleasure ground, he goes on to say, and make it ripple and bubble, and spout up prettily into the air, and then fancy they are taming the Atlantic, which, however, keeps advancing upon them, until it sweeps them away with their toys.—*F. Jacox.*

Mr. Carlyle made a picturesque application of the royal Dane's injunction to the waves, in his survey of the advancing tide of the French Revolution—grim host marching on, the black-browed Marseillaise in the van, with hum and murmur, far heard; like the ocean tide, "drawn up, as if by Luna and Influences, from the great deep of

waters, they roll gleaming on; no king, Cnut or Louis, can bid them roll back." To quite another effect is Judge Haliburton's application of the incident, in his panegyric on the capabilities of the Southampton docks. It was here, he says, that Cnut sat in his armchair, to show his courtiers (after he gave up drinking and murder) that, though he was a mighty prince, he could not control the sea. "Well, what Cnut could not do, your dock company has accomplished. It has actually said to the sea, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther'; and the waves have obeyed the mandate."—*Ibid.*

Some dream, says Cowper, that . . . "they can silence when they will  
The storm of passion, and say, 'Peace, be still':  
But 'Thus far and no farther,' when addressed  
To the wild wave, or wilder human breast,  
Implies authority that never can,  
That never ought to be the lot of man."

## CHAPTER V.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Gadarenes.**—*Gerasenes* is undoubtedly the true reading here, and in Origen's time it was the prevalent one; "but the copyists, thinking this referred to the well-known Gerasa in Gilead, and knowing that the miracle could not have occurred there, at a distance of twenty miles from the Sea of Galilee, altered it to 'Gadarenes,' since at Gadara there were the 'tombs,' and other particulars of the miracle, and it might easily be supposed that the whole district took its name from this chief city. Gadara is a little over six miles from the lake. As for the reading 'Gergesenes,' we owe it either to Origen's own conjecture, or else Gergesa was a dialectic variety of the name Gerasa." To Dr. Thomson we owe the discovery of the real site. "It is," he says, "within a few rods of the shore, and an immense mountain rises directly above it, in which are ancient tombs. . . . The lake is so near the base of the mountain, that the swine rushing madly down it could not stop, but would be hurried on into the water. . . . The name, pronounced by Bedouin Arabs, is so similar to Gergesa, that, to all my inquiries for the place, they invariably said it was at Chersa; and they insisted that they were identical." See *The Land and the Book*, pp. 375-378.

Ver. 2. **A man.**—Matthew (viii. 28) mentions two men. Mark and Luke speak only of the better known or fiercer of the two, who probably acted as spokesman for both.

Ver. 5. **Cutting.**—Or, *beating*.

Ver. 7.—See note on chap. i. 24.

Ver. 9. **Legion.**—Cp. Matt. xii. 45; Luke viii. 2.

Ver. 15. **Clothed.**—He had been wont to wear no upper garment (Luke viii. 27), and doubtless such clothes as he had were very ragged.

Ver. 20. **Decapolis.**—*The district of the ten cities*, lying for the most part east of the Jordan, and east and south-east of the Sea of Tiberias. Its ten cities were Scythopolis (the only one on the west of Jordan), Hippos, Gadara, Pella, Philadelphia, Geresas, Dion, Canatha, Raphana, Damascus.

Ver. 22. **Rulers of the synagogue.**—The synagogues had no clergy, but were managed by laymen, who conducted or superintended the services, and administered discipline. The rulers of Capernaum had already (Luke vii. 3) approached our Lord on behalf of the centurion who built their synagogue. Now one of them comes to prefer a petition on his own account.

Ver. 25. **An issue of blood.**—*Hæmorrhage*. See Lev. xv. 19-30.

Ver. 36. **As soon as Jesus heard.**—For another reading see R.V. It is not easy to determine the exact shade of meaning which *παράκουσας* bears here. Dr. F. Field renders, "Jesus, making as though He heareth not the word spoken," etc.

Ver. 41. **Talitha cumi.**—St. Peter, who was present, would treasure in his memory the very words used.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses 1—20.*

(PARALLELS: MATT. viii. 28-34; LUKE viii. 26-39.)

*Christ and the Gadarenes.*—I. **The Gadarene demoniac.**—1. What was the nature of the so-called "demonism" of the New Testament? It is nowhere said there concerning any one that he was possessed of the devil. In one passage only (Acts x. 38) mention is made of the healing of "all that were oppressed of the devil." But in all other like passages there is no mention made of "the devil," but of "unclean spirits" or "demons." 2. A second point of difficulty that troubles some people is that this describing of a malady as if it were the infestation of some living thing that had entered into the person seems so like the relic of a barbarous and superstitious pathology, which ascribes all sicknesses to such a cause. To which we may make either of two answers: (1) That if this description of certain maladies as wrought by evil spirits is a survival of the superstitious notion that all maladies were so caused, it may be a survival of just so much in that notion as was true and ought to survive. Or, (2) That if barbarism and superstition used to allege that all human diseases are produced by the agency of living beings invisible to the ordinary sight entering into the patient, then barbarism and superstition are in pretty good company, considering that the very latest word of the most advanced pathological science comes out at precisely the same point. 3. Why are there no cases of demonism in our own times? (1) It is not certain that there are no such cases now. There are many who insist, with a very formidable array of evidence in favour of their claim, that cases of possession by spirits, clean or unclean, are peculiarly frequent in these days. (2) If no cases just like what are described in the Gospels are recognised in modern pathology, this is no more than might be expected from analogy. It is one of the commonest maxims of medical science that the type of diseases changes from age to age. For my part, I find it nothing unlikely that in an age like that of the coming of our Lord, when a decisive conflict was impending between the kingdom of evil and the kingdom of heaven, those maladies that involve the mind and soul, and indicate the presence of some mischievous spiritual agency, should be found to take on a character of peculiar malignity. 4. Taking the Gospels as an honest and not unintelligent record of the phenomena, we make out two points very clearly concerning this demonism: (1) It was not mere lunacy or epilepsy, for these diseases are recognised and clearly distinguished from the work of the evil spirits. (2) As this demonism was not mere disease, so, on the other hand, it was not mere wickedness—the wilful giving up one's self to the instigation of the devil. It is always spoken of and dealt with as an involuntary affliction, looked upon by the Lord with pity rather than censure. Neither is it treated as if it were, in any special sense, a visitation for sin. 5. The truth seems to be this: that sin, unbelief, ungodliness, opened the way for this awful curse, and that, when the alien spirit had taken hold of body and mind and will, it had the power of plaguing with various disorders—with wild, moping, melancholic madness, or with epileptic convulsions, or blindness, or dumbness. 6. The startling and unearthly fact, in the words and actions of the demoniac,



is the presence in him of a double consciousness and will. He is torn with discordant desires, and tossed to and fro between conflicting passions. Physicians who have studied the horrible symptoms of *delirium tremens* describe the sort of double consciousness that sometimes characterises its wretched victims, in terms which remind us of this demonism described by the Evangelists. 7. As to the spirits themselves, we get some hints of their ways here and elsewhere in the New Testament. They are represented as wandering uneasy and restless until they can find lodgment in some human body and soul, if may be; if not there, then anywhere, even in a swine's carcass—some living organism of which they can take possession, and there work their malignant will. The unclean spirit beds itself luxuriously in the consciousness and thoughts and members of its victims, and loathes to be dispossessed. Like certain noxious tropical insects, it sinks its feelers and tentacles into the flesh, so that to tear it away is like tearing the flesh away from itself. To leave it there is torture, and to remove it is worse torture; so that the patient rushes to the surgeon, and, when the surgeon puts forth his hand to heal him, it is as if victim and tormentor shrank away together, crying: "Let me alone! I beseech thee, torment me not!" Now is it any dark parable to you, that I should need explain how like this is to the possession which sin takes of the mind?—how evil thoughts and passions and purposes, for which the soul was not made, but which are alien to its Divine constitution in God's image, do root themselves like a morbid growth into its very substance, till the soul, bewildered at the unnatural conflict within itself, cries out against the power of sin, craving to be delivered, and then, when the Deliverer comes near, cries out again, with a loud voice: "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of God most high? I beseech Thee, torment me not!" 8. What help is there for the soul that is in such a plight—the will, the motives, the desires, the active faculties, all that should co-operate in the effort of self-healing, themselves implicated in the disease, so that even when deliverance is brought nigh it will none of it, but warns the Saviour away? It will, and yet it will not. The consciousness of need and danger are of no avail; even faith and prayer bring no help, for there is no prayer but with a reservation—let not the double-minded man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord. So Augustine prayed, "Save me, O Lord, save me,—but not now." O helpless man, the hope for you is that God will be to you better than your prayers, will do for you exceeding abundantly above that you ask,—that when you pray, "Save me, but not now," He will answer, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation: look unto Me now and be saved." Be not afraid to come near your Lord and Saviour, even though the sin that is in you, the evil thoughts, the demoniac passions, cry out against your prayers and say, "Let us alone! torment us not! depart from us! what have we do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the most high God?" Doubt not that the compassionate Lord will be more ready to hear this craving of your better nature than the clamour of a legion of evil spirits, and that, if you will but suffer Him, He will deliver you from your worse self; He will command the inward discord of your mind to cease, and make the storm a calm; and you, even though it be not without sore rendings from the retreating fiend, shall at last sit peaceful at the feet of your Redeemer, clothed and in your right mind.

11. **The gospel among the Gadarenes.**—1. You may be at a loss, perhaps, to see any good reason why the healing of the wretched man possessed of demons should have been an occasion of terror to the people of the neighbourhood. It might seem more reasonable that they should have found it rather an immense relief to their fears, when the frightful creature that had been the terror of that part of the country, whose horrible frenzies had made the road that led by his cave impassable, so that they took long circuits to avoid him, was found

by them sitting as quiet as a good child, at the feet of Jesus, trying to learn something of God and truth and duty, and of who this wonderful Saviour was—this destroyer of the works of the devil. What good reason could they find, in all that they had heard, for sending Jesus out from their borders? What *good* reason? Ah! but this is asking too much—to look for a good reason for a wrong action. It is the very nature of sin to be unreasonable. Its reasons are no reasons. We may look for the motives of it, and for the excuses for it. But in giving *reasons* for wrong conduct, we cannot go much further than to shew that it is like the conduct of human nature in general under like circumstances. And we do not pretend to justify human nature. Why should Adam and Eve be afraid when they heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden? Why should Moses be afraid and hide his face when the Lord spoke to him out of the burning bush, and said, “I am the God of thy father”? Why should Isaiah, when he saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, cry out, “Woe is me, for I am undone, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts”? It is in human nature, somehow, account for it as you may, that men do not like to come quite so near to God. It is not only that they shrink from the manifestation of the Divine anger—that would be intelligible enough; but men do not like such close dealings with God anyway. In fact, anything that brings them close, face to face with the powers of the unseen world is a thing that men in general shrink from. It is the one labour of the ministry of the gospel to persuade men to come near enough to God to know Him—to look Christ in the face long enough to know Him. Dr. H. A. Boardman wrote a little book entitled *The Great Question*; and when you looked within to see what “the great question” was, you found it nothing but this—“Will you *consider the subject* of personal religion?” And why should not any man—every man—say *yes* to this Great Question? But they will not. The complaint of the old prophet is the complaint of the modern preacher—“My people will not consider.” Our lips frame words of welcome and praise; but our hearts are all the time silently pleading with Him to “let us alone,” and depart out of our coasts, even though we would shrink from putting such a thought into words. We feel easier with a legion of malignant demons near us, than with one faithful and merciful and holy Saviour. 2. The second topic of consultation among the Gadarenes was this: “concerning the swine.” I do believe (to do these people justice) that if we could have been there, and could have charged them to the face with having deliberately rejected Christ, wilfully driven away the Great Healer, simply on account of their interest in pork-raising, they would indignantly and sincerely have repelled the imputation, and have suggested a number of other reasons by which they supposed they were actuated, instead of the one which really affected and decided their minds. I do not believe they said explicitly to each other, “This is a great and Divine work of mercy. God Himself is manifest here destroying the works of the devil, and delivering our fellow-man from bondage to unclean spirits. Surely the kingdom of God is come nigh unto us! But then, on the other hand, see what it costs; two thousand head of pork is a great deal to lose, and we will not have God’s kingdom.” I do not believe they *said* this; I do not believe they distinctly *thought* it; but they *did* it. And you, beware how you put yourself under the same condemnation. For you need not expect that the gospel of salvation will ever come to you without bringing along with it some conditions of loss and self-denial. It will interfere with your plans, break up your arrangements, frustrate your schemes, in business, in politics, in society, in the conduct of life. That petty fraud—that adulteration or misrepresentation, so common that no one thinks of it—that smart, lying advertisement that you have got in your desk ready for the press—those keen little tricks or

disingenuous compliances in politics that are to carry the caucus or the election and put you into office and keep you there—those shams and deceits, that neglect of homely duties and of wearying charities, by which you are studying to gain social position and pleasure, how these herds of unclean things, the soilure and blemish of your lives, will have to rush off into the sea, if the Holy Christ is to come to you and live with you! Are you ready to let them go, or will you rather come and pray the Lord to depart out of your neighbourhood?

III. The apostle to the Gadarenes. There, away up the hillside, the angry crowd are lingering yet. They have carried their point, and the Saviour whom they have rejected has turned to leave them; it is so easy to be rid of Jesus if you will. Downward He goes in sorrow to the beach where the little shallop lies rocking in the sands, and timidly in the rear comes this new disciple with only one humble petition—"that he might be with Him." "Go home to thy friends!" "But, Lord, I have no friend but Thee. I have been an outcast now these many years, a dweller in unclean sepulchres, abhorred of men. What have men done for me but bind me in chains and fetters of iron? But Thy hand hath loosed my bonds of pain, and bound me with Thy love!" Let me be with Thee where Thou art!" But still from that Most Gracious One comes the inexorable, "Go back—back to thy friends and thy father's house—go tell them what the Lord hath done for thee!" "What? I, Lord? I, so disused to rational speech? whose lips and tongue were but now the organs of demoniac blasphemy? I, just rallying from the rending of the exorcised fiends? I, surrounded by a hostile people, that have just warned away my Lord and Saviour from their coasts? And can I hope that they will hear my words, who turn a deaf and rebellious ear to Thee? Nay, Lord, I entreat Thee let me be with Thee, there sitting at Thy feet clothed and in my right mind, that men may look and point at me and glorify my Lord, my Saviour! Let them go, whose zeal to tell of Thee even Thy interdict cannot repress,—there be many such—send them! But let me be near Thee, be with Thee, and gaze, and love, and be silent, and adore!" Was ever a stronger argument of prayer? And yet Christ departs, and the grateful believer is left alone to do the work for which he seems so insufficient and unfit! To translate the story into the terms of our daily life, it shews us: 1. That the path of duty which Christ has marked out for us may be the opposite of that which we naturally think and ardently desire. You say to yourself that a man must be willing to leave father and mother and children and business for the gospel's sake: but God finds some way of admonishing you that a man must also be willing to stay by them for the gospel's sake, when he is called thereto, and answers the fine texts with which you try to excuse yourself from humble and irksome duty with other texts, how he that provideth not for his own household is worse than an infidel, - and how he makes void the law of God who says to his father or mother *Corban*—I have consecrated to religious uses the time and labour that might have gone to your support;—and so God shuts up your favourite path of service, and makes plain before your feet a very humble and obscure little by-way for you to walk in. 2. That when religious privilege and religious duty seem to conflict, the duty is to be preferred above the privilege. It would seem as if the case of this lunatic had been set before us here as an *a fortiori* case for all generations to the end of time. What one of us can ever be called to surrender that supreme religious privilege—the personal, visible companionship, the personal, audible teaching of Jesus the Lord? And if *he* might not choose, but must needs go away, untaught, untrained, to be alone from his Saviour, and be himself a teacher of others, can there ever be imagined a case between duty and privilege when you or I should be at liberty to hesitate? 3. That duty, preferred and followed instead of



privilege, becomes itself the supreme privilege. See to what honour came this nameless man at last. Having given up the infinite delight of the personal companionship of Jesus, behold him now promoted to this dignity, that he should be the first in the kingdom of heaven. The trained disciples, that had left all to follow the Lord, are passed over, and this highest honour, that he should be the first commissioned preacher of the gospel, is given to him who left the Lord Himself, at His command, to do the Lord's work. And no man knoweth his name unto this day. But in the resurrection those unknown syllables shall be spoken again with "Well done, good and faithful servant," and shall shine above those of prophets and apostles, like the sun, and like the brightness of the firmament, for ever and ever.—*L. W. Bacon.*

Ver. 17. *Christ rejected by the Gadarenes.*—We are not surprised to learn, that those "in the city and in the country," when such strange tidings reached them, "went out to see what it was that was done." We should have so acted ourselves in similar circumstances. Perhaps we think that here the likeness ends; and that, instead of beseeching One who had given such proofs of power and goodness to "depart out of our coasts," we should rather have imitated the conduct of the people of Sychar (John iv. 40). In both cases Jesus granted the request made. What the Gadarenes lost by their rejection of Him we may never know; but that their loss may be our gain, let us try to discover the feelings which influenced these persons, and which may still actuate any possessed of the same depraved and disordered moral constitution.

I. *Vexation at pecuniary loss sustained.*—We may partly excuse this feeling on the ground of its naturalness, but we may not allow it to be a just and right one. We may not admit that ever so large an amount of this world's goods is to be weighed in the balance against one immortal soul, "turned from darkness to light," etc. Moreover, the Gadarenes had ample evidence that He who permitted this destruction of property was no ordinary man, for "with authority He commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed Him." He belonged, evidently, to another world. He had passed the boundary which separates things visible from invisible. He must have much to tell, therefore, which is most important for all to know, who are conscious that they possess a spiritual nature. Compared with the benefits which all might expect to reap from His "wisdom and mighty works," what was the injury which a few had sustained from the loss of a portion of their worldly wealth?

II. *The dread of preternatural agency.*—"They were afraid" (ver. 15). Why, and when? Not when they beheld the traces of the destructive energy which had been at work; but when they saw "him that was possessed . . . sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind." Not because they thought he would do them an injury—he was now as harmless as he had heretofore been dangerous; but because they saw in him one who had just been the subject of a preternatural agency, and because the Agent Himself was close at hand. So Peter (Luke v. 8). So all the disciples (Luke viii. 25). These Gadarenes had hitherto been living according to the course of this world. Perhaps they professed some form of religion; but it exercised no regenerating influence over their hearts: of the "power of godliness" they knew nothing at all. Probably they had heard a rumour of the "Great Prophet who had risen up" amongst their neighbours; but it had made no particular impression upon them; not one of them thought more of making provision for another life, or less of getting and enjoying the good things of this. Suddenly their carnal ease is broken in upon by the report of the arrival of the new Teacher in their own country, and of the awful display of supernatural power which ensued. The effect was instantaneous. It was like the first warnings of an earthquake—the slight

trembling which preceles the more powerful shock which is to bury the city in its own ruins. Not more hastily do the inhabitants, on the first premonitory vibration, rush out of their houses and take refuge in the open country, than did the Gadarenes, with one accord, "pray Jesus to depart out of their coasts." They desired to have nothing to do with Him. He had already seriously disturbed them; and if He were allowed to go on, who could tell whereunto these things would grow?

**III. Consciousness of guilt, and fear of punishment.**—Yes, "guilt" is the word, as implying not only wrong, but wrong which must be answered for, wrong which subjects to the penalty of the law. This is what all mankind are alike implicated in. God had not left these Gadarenes without a witness to Him in their own breasts, for He had given them a conscience, and thoughts which accused or excused according to the bidding of that inward monitor. But they, being ignorant of God's ways, and knowing only that they were "the enemies of God by wicked works," supposed that He must be their enemy also, and could think of no other way of fleeing from His wrath but by fleeing from Him and from every one who came in His name. What could be more natural? All that they had as yet heard or seen of Jesus only confirmed them in the impression that He was come to torment them before their time, and to bring upon them or their families such swift destruction as had already befallen their swine. We cannot doubt that abject personal fear had the largest share in prompting them to "pray Him to depart out of their coasts."

**Lessons.**—1. Was it the loss of worldly substance which induced the Gadarenes to wish to be rid of Christ's presence? In this, even knowing no more of Him than they did, they acted foolishly and wickedly. But what must be said of those who know Him to be the Saviour of the world—"the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" and yet allow worldly considerations to prevent them from reaping the full benefit of His Mission? 2. Did the carnal-minded Gadarenes see in Jesus a messenger from the invisible world, who was come to turn their thoughts from things temporal to things eternal? and did they therefore desire to have nothing to do with Him? This also was inexcusable even in them; but how much more so in us! We cannot plead that it was well with us *before* this Man of God came among us, and that we desire to "let well alone." There never was a time when He was *not* among us—never a time when the name of Jesus, His work and His doctrine, were not familiar to us as household words. "In the light are we, that in us the light may be." Let us, then, go out to meet "Him that cometh in the name of the Lord," and pray Him not to depart from us, not to let us alone, but to come unto us, and make His abode with us, for time and for eternity. 3. Did the Gadarenes reject Christ because they saw in Him a swift Minister of that Divine vengeance which was due to them for their sins? We cannot blame them for this. But what if they had been better instructed in the nature of His Person and Mission? What if they had known that (1 Tim. ii. 5)? What if they had heard those charming words (John iii. 16, 17; 1 John iv. 9)? Why, then the whole population would surely have gone out to meet Him, and to escort Him in triumph into their city. While they accepted Him as their Priest to make atonement for them, they would have sat at His feet as their Prophet, and sworn allegiance to Him as their King. What they did not know we do; therefore the reception which, had they known, they would have given Him let us give, and the homage which they would have rendered to Him let us render, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb," etc.

Vers. 17-19. *The two prayers.*—No contrast could be more striking than that presented by these verses. Under what circumstances was it, and with what

motives, that these two prayers, most opposite in their purport, were offered to Christ? The answer to this question will shew us that these two contrary prayers are in fact offered up to Him now and daily,—one or other of them by every one of us; both, at different times, by many.

**I. The prayer of the Gadarenes.**—They might have known that One who gave signs so infallible of a Divine Mission must have a message for them from God. That that message was on the whole a gracious message they might have inferred from the sight of one out of whom demons were departed sitting at His feet clothed and in his right mind. But no: their fears and their displeasure prevailed, and they prayed Him only to depart out of their coasts. These Gadarenes were a type of thousands now. To us also Christ has come. We hear His Word. We see those miracles of His grace by which the thoughtless, selfish, sinful, are changed into a new image by the transforming power of faith in Christ. These things we see;—and, if our own heart condemns us as being still ourselves dead in sin, we may well tremble as we behold. But what further effect have these things had upon us? Have we drawn near to Him whose works are thus mighty, whose words are thus gracious? Have we sought to know more of Him than we could by the mere hearing of the ear? Being assured, by His own promise, that He hears prayers, have we prayed, are we daily praying, to Him? Do we bring to Him our daily wants and sins and weaknesses, our daily duties, snares, and temptations, and ask in each for the ever-present help of His Holy Spirit? Or do we neglect all these things, and live much as we should if Christ had never died for us, and try to keep as far from Him as possible, lest we should be obliged to part with those things which we love better? Then, it is with us just as if we every day uttered the prayer of these Gadarenes, and besought Christ to depart from us! And this is a prayer which is soon answered. In that heart which refuses to believe Christ does no mighty works, because of its unbelief. He who desires to forget Christ may easily succeed in doing so. The Lord's Spirit will not alway strive with man. So long as by our carelessness or our sins we are praying Christ to depart from us, and not to torment us before the time, so long we may too reasonably fear that that prayer will be heard—that He who has come out of His place with offers of mercy, He who is calling to us from heaven, and bidding us hear and live, will go and return unto His place, till we acknowledge our offence and seek His face.

**II. The prayer of the man delivered from demons.** Knowing his own weakness, and the subtlety of his great enemy; knowing that till he heard the voice of Christ he had been in bondage, and that only by His strength is he free; fearing lest the departure of his Deliverer should be the signal for the return of the unclean spirit to his now deserted habitation,—he prays that he may remain with Christ, contented to be the companion of Him who has not where to lay His head, if he may but still hear the sound of that gracious voice, and be still within the reach of that compassionate arm. But as the prayer of unbelief and of carelessness, which beseeches Christ to depart, is but too surely fulfilled in His withdrawal, so this, though it be the prayer of faith and love, is yet no less surely refused. The time for uninterrupted converse with the Lord is hereafter, not now. A life of rapturous meditation, of ecstatic communion with a world unseen, is not that which will best glorify Christ, or shine most brightly before men. He who has been first healed by Christ must go back into the world to shew forth His praise. By pureness, by meekness, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, he must be Christ's witness; men must take knowledge of him, by these signs, that he has been with Jesus. This is his work:—the other his refreshment, his recreation, his invigoration for future service. Seasons indeed are allowed him—and happy is he who cares for them—of visiting Christ, of communing with Him, of receiving from Him new



supplies of mercy and grace. Such opportunities are prayer, the study of Scripture, and above all the Holy Communion; opportunities of being with Christ, of seeking from Him the restoration and revival of our souls—the casting out of those evil spirits of pride and sensuality and worldliness, which are ever regaining, in some new form, the possession of our hearts, and which no power but Christ's can enable us to overcome. But every such approach to Him implies and looks forward to a subsequent return to the duties of daily life. We come to renew our strength, that again we may run and not be weary. We come to eat of that living bread, that so in the strength of that meat we may enter upon another stage of our pilgrimage towards the heavenly city.—*Dean Vaughan.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1-15. *The greatness and the weakness of man.*—1. His greatness—seen in the fact that many demons can enter into him. Shew how men may be great in evil as well as in good—tyrants, warriors, conspirators, hypocrites, etc. 2. His weakness—seen in his yielding where he ought to have resisted, in his helplessness when he had once admitted the power of evil into his heart—seen also in his fear of the only power that could redeem him from its bondage.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*A revelation of the Saviour's glory.*—1. As the Son of the living God. 2. As the King of the world of spirits. 3. As the Deliverer of the wretched. 4. As the Holy One, who does not suffer himself to be entreated in vain to depart.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*

Ver. 3. *An inveterate habit of uncleanness* frequently extinguishes all the principles of the Christian life; and an unchaste soul dwells in its body as in a loathsome sepulchre, where there is nothing but the remains of worms and corruption. This is but too often literally true. An unchaste person is a madman, whom everything provokes, whom nothing stops, and who will not bear the least restraint.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 4. *Spiritual strength.*—That poor man, possessed by that unclean spirit, was able to burst the fetters and chains which bound his limbs, and to break through all opposition of the

arms of men; how much more powerful is he who is possessed by the Spirit of God, his will wholly given to obey His call, powerful to break away through any bonds with which the world would bind him, and to follow on the heavenly path, defying all opposition of an ungodly world!

Ver. 5. *The desolate places of the earth.*—The gloomy waste, the sterile desert, are the contrast of Eden, and shewed themselves contemporaneously with man's transgression; death and the grave are the result of sin—what fitter habitation than these could Satan and his myrmidons find? The demoniac, in the midst of his mental confusion, retains his old notions of the habits of demons, and yields readily to the impulse that sends him to solitude and graves, wherein he supposed they specially delight. How far he is a free agent, how far under the control of an alien force, we cannot accurately define. This is one of those mysterious matters of which we are greatly ignorant; but we have glimpses of an identification of man and devil which is inexpressibly awful. Meantime, whatever opinion we may form concerning the notion of evil spirits being especially attached to certain localities (and if we localise holiness we may equally localise wickedness), we may at any rate learn this lesson, that it is in souls dry of grace that Satan takes up his abode, in hearts not filled with love and faith that he

finds entrance. Solitude does not bar him out. People have fled to the desert, living a life of want and pain far away from the busy haunts of men, that there, alone with God, as they thought, they might wrestle out their soul's salvation; but the tempter has found them there. Wherever a soul is to be lost or won, as surely as this present life is our trial-time, as surely as this present world is our battle-field, so surely in this time and place are we exposed to the assaults of evil; and nothing can keep us safe but watchfulness and prayer.—*W. J. Deane.*

*The madness of sin.*—Having gone through some fearful scenes with madmen, I have a vivid idea of what this savage was. How strong, how rampant, how brutal! I have seen one leap from a third-storey window at a bound, and another crimson with his own blood from broken glass, and yet another defying five police-officers to touch a hair of his head. And what lessons have I then and there learned about the dreadfulness of being given up to Satan, and having such frenzied beings for everlasting associates—lessons, too, of thankfulness to God for sparing our reason, and warding off those accidents which might have robbed us of it. A fall on the ice, a fright, a blow from a stick, and you and I might now be even such outcasts.—*Jas. Bolton.*

Vers. 6, 7. *A double nature.*—That the man worshipped Jesus, and yet a moment after the evil spirit within him cried with a loud voice, as one who was not in the kingdom of Jesus—this is like our daily case. There is within us a double nature—a good spirit and an evil spirit; one minute one prevails, another minute the other governs. Even the best man is not free from sin. Good people have said they are surprised at the wickedness within them. On the other hand, even the worst man is hardly a devil yet. But most of us are between the two. We change, not perhaps quite

so quickly as he whom the Gospel describes, and yet very quickly. In the morning we worship Jesus with our prayer and make good resolutions. But perhaps the same day, not long after, we lose our temper, and say spiteful things that have nothing in common with Jesus, the Son of God. Or perhaps he who said a prayer the same day is drunken, or does some dishonest action, or tells a lie. Thus we pass from Jesus to Satan.—*Jas. Lonsdale.*

Ver. 7. *The struggle to get rid of sin.*—A man can never leave sin without violence; he can never root up an evil habit but nature must suffer deeply. She fights against grace; she causes the flesh to strive against the Spirit, and will against will. Whoever loves impurity dreads to be delivered from it, and omits nothing to continue himself under that miserable possession.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 9. *Legion.*—It may be that the fiends within him dictated his reply, or that he himself, conscious of their tyranny, cried out in agony, We are many—a regiment like those of conquering Rome, drilled and armed to trample and destroy, a legion. This answer distinctly contravened what Christ had just implied, that he was one, an individual, and precious in his Maker's eyes. But there are men and women in every Christian land whom it might startle to look within, and see how far their individuality is oppressed and overlaid by a legion of impulses, appetites, and conventionalities, which leave them nothing personal, nothing essential and characteristic, nothing that deserves a name.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*Troops of temptations.*—Our enemies come upon us like a torrent. How much does it concern us to band our hearts together in a communion of saints! The number of our enemies adds to the praise of our victory. To overcome single temptations is commendable; but to subdue troops of

temptations is glorious (Matt. xii. 45; Isa. lix. 19; Phil. i. 27).—*Bishop Hall.*

*The Legion of sin.*—Truly the name of sin is Legion. It is anger, malice, intemperance, murder, impurity, unfaithfulness, dishonesty, equivocation, dissimulation, falsehood, hypocrisy, ingratitude, disobedience, impatience, discontentment, envy, covetousness; it is profanity, formality, superstition, idolatry, blasphemy, and atheism. It is a repudiation of the authority, a defiance of the power, a slight to the wisdom, a contempt of the holiness, and unthankfulness for the goodness of God. It is the cause of all the error, conflict, cruelty, suffering, weeping, and woe that exist in this world. Like a foul demon, it has poisoned and polluted, blighted and cursed, everything it has touched. It has caused man, the noblest work of God, to become the destroyer of his own soul, the murderer of his brother, the enemy of his God.—*A. Thompson.*

Ver. 12. *The prayer of the demons.*—1. The language of conscious degradation. The demons knew there was an inexorable necessity carrying them downwards; the lake of unutterable woe would receive them at length; but they felt as if it would be a breaking of their fall, a something less than their ultimate misery, to take up their abode even in the vilest and most loathsome of the brute creation. Think not that you can indulge your vicious propensities without debasing your moral nature, or that you can tempt others to moral depravity without yourself becoming more depraved. 2. The language of conscious terror and alarm. That woful and degrading punishment they would acquiesce in, nay, acknowledge as a mark of condescension and favour, hoping thereby to effect at least a temporary delay of their ultimate sentence to the lake of endless perdition. They gain their wish; their prayer is answered; and with it increasing debasement, and the consummation of woe. Verily, it is a dangerous thing to tamper with our moral nature,

and to take even a single step that leads down the terrible declivity.—*J. Cochrane.*

Ver. 13. *Jesus gave them leave.*—Thus His power over the world of spirits was shown to be absolute; they could not operate even on the lower animals without His permission, much less could they dominate men, the sheep of His pasture. And at the same time this hidden world was demonstrated to be very real and very formidable, encompassing our path, restlessly seeking to mar, and to deface, and to destroy. Hereby too the sufferer was assured of his cure, and realised from what a tremendous evil he had been delivered; he was afforded a visible proof of that supernatural region; he was allowed a glimpse behind that veil which mortal eye cannot penetrate.—*W. J. Deane.*

*Why such destruction?*—Some think that the herd belonged to Jews, who were thus justly punished for dealing with animals forbidden by the law. But if the owners were Gentiles, another reason may be given. The heathen may have needed to be taught the reality of demoniacal possession, and that it was the providence of God alone that preserved them from evils worse than those which they saw exemplified in the demoniacs and the swine; or they might thus learn that salvation is of the Jews, and that it was the same God who gave to them their laws who shewed His authority over evil spirits by the demolition of the herd.—*Ibid.*

*The drowning of the herd* does not appear to have entered into the calculations of the unclean spirits. They desired houses to live in after their expulsion, and for them to plunge the swine into the lake would have defeated their purpose. The stampede was an unexpected effect of the commingling of the demoniac with the animal nature, and outwitted the demons. "The devil is an ass." There is a lower depth than the animal nature; and even swine feel uncomfortable when the demon is in them, and in



their panic rush anywhere to get rid of the incubus, and, before they know, find themselves struggling in the lake. "Which things are an allegory."—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Vers. 14, 15. *Miracles not necessarily convincing.*—No miracle could be more decisive, or more directed to the hearts of men, than that which Christ worked on this occasion, and yet it produced no good effect whatever on the Gadarenes. The fact is, that much previous education and preparation are necessary in order to make a miracle effectual; in certain cases it may be wholesome or even necessary, but it is of the nature of a very violent medicine, which if administered indiscriminately may do much more harm than good. Might not one of the purposes of our Lord in working this miracle, which in some respects is of so exceptional a kind, have been to shew how impracticable it would have been for Him to establish His kingdom in the world by mere force of miracles?—*Bishop H. Goodwin.*

Ver. 15. *A reformed character.*—When the formerly careless and mad wanderer after this world's vain bubbles is under the salutary influence of Divine grace, where is he to be found, and what is he doing? He is to be found "sitting at the feet of Jesus," receiving the instruction which the gospel of Jesus imparts, watching daily at wisdom's gates, and waiting at the posts of wisdom's doors. He is to be found in the court of the Lord's house, waiting to hear what God the Lord will say unto him by the Divine Word. He becomes a companion of all those that fear God and keep His commandments. He now delights in the society of those as the excellent of the earth, whom he formerly hated and reviled as needlessly precise or superstitiously religious.—*E. Edwards.*

*Lessons.*—1. How one spirit may disturb a whole household—make every means of happiness vain—render all the resources for enjoyment of no worth! All these resources only say,

How happy we *might* be! There is a relief when our sorrow comes from sickness, accident, the visitation of God; but when it comes from *moral insanity*, the arrow is barbed indeed, and strikes and rankles deep. How much there is of this—from intemperance, dishonesty, passion, selfishness, sensuality, and meanness! 2. Jesus can transform this wild spirit and send him home a blessing. The moral maniac has been tamed! The ferocious tiger has departed, and the serenity of a true, manly soul has appeared—like the passing of the thunderous clouds that made night awful, and the coming forth of the morn, pouring her baptism of light on hill and tower and on the rolling river and the home. 3. Do not let us shake all this off with the passing hour, because we are *not* maniacs and cannot go home as such. But let this be our question: Where do we stand *between* this extreme, and what we should be? Here is the terrible maniac, and there is Jesus—where are we? With which have we the most features of character in common?—*Henry Bacon.*

Ver. 17. *Sins of communities.*—1. It is possible for communities as communities to sin, to transgress the law of righteousness, to incur guilt. 2. When a town as a town, or a parish as a parish, by its own vote and determination, does what is wrong, the bad consequences of the evil act are very likely to involve those who disapproved of the unrighteousness along with those who favoured it. 3. The duty which attaches to all right-minded people of trying to prevent this thing. By the words we speak, the opinions we express, the preferences we hint, the disapprovals we venture, the judgments we utter, the votes we cast, we do all of us and every one help to give character to the aggregate of public opinion. How are we to exercise this power of influence as we ought? By always seeking, as God gives us grace to do so, to take the worthiest and highest view of every question that

comes before us.—*W. R. Huntington, D.D.*

*Entreating Christ to depart.*—It is an entreating of Christ to depart out of our coasts, whenever we allow ourselves in ever so little a matter to put profit before principle, to prefer gain to godliness. The permanence and stability of all we value most in social life, the maintenance of mutual confidence, the preservation of the purity of home—these and many other such precious possessions depend on being able to keep Christ within our borders.—*Ibid.*

*A Christless world.*—That will be indeed a fatal day for society if ever the voices of those who would have Christ depart should so far prevail as to secure the accomplishment of the wish. Picture the Christless world rolling on its dismal course through space, no homes of prayer anywhere upon its surface, no gathered congregations lifting the voice of worship, no kneeling suppliants interceding for the sick and sorrowing, no bread of life, no cup of blessing, no tender ministries of loving care and sympathy, no children taught to say "Our Father," no holy benediction for man and wife, no word of trustful hope for the dying, no utterance of faith in a joyful resurrection over the dead—nothing of all this, but, instead, only one long, hard, selfish struggle to see who shall be richest and who shall be strongest in a life of which the grave is the acknowledged end.—*Ibid.*

*The difficulty of saving work.*—Those who are acquainted with missionary exertions, either of ancient or modern times, to plant the gospel in heathen countries, know with what extreme difficulty any saving effect is wrought. In most instances, perhaps, the Word of life has been rejected, and Christ desired to depart out of their coasts, as an unwelcome guest, who was come to torment them before the time. But need we go far from home to see this? When any attempt is made to revive practical religion in our days, and to call the attention of nominal

Christians to those grand truths which they profess in words, how is the attempt received? When Christ is faithfully preached, and the doctrines of His religion explained and pressed upon men's consciences, how do they behave? When any among them are persuaded to receive Christ into their hearts by faith, to come out from the world which lieth in wickedness, and to devote themselves to His service, how are they treated by their unbelieving friends? Is there not still something in the presence of Christ, and the close application of His doctrines to the mind and conscience, that is tormenting? Is not a life formed upon the principles of the gospel offensive to those who will not receive nor act upon those principles?—*W. Richardson.*

Vers. 18, 19. *Lessons.*—1. This shews how dear the presence of Christ is to those who have seen and felt His grace. 2. Let us submit readily to our Lord's will in all His denials of our requests. 3. Let us reflect on the experience we have had of the power and compassion of Christ. 4. What noble subjects religion furnishes for domestic converse! 5. How graciously Christ adapts our sphere of labour to the state of the body and mind! 6. Be content to labour in the humblest and most private sphere.—*H. Belfrage, D.D.*

Ver. 19. *Home.*—A man may be said to have two lives in one—his public and his home life. Those who work with him through the week can tell you his outward character, his habits, his appearance; but there may be a great deal, whether of good or bad, that they do not know because they do not know his home. If they did, they might respect him more than they do already, or despise him more than they do already, but probably their opinion of him would not remain the same. 1. Home is the refuge of affections. Among strangers we might be misunderstood or condemned; at home we are believed in; they who

know us best, know that, with all our faults, there is something to care about. 2. Home is a place of memories. In your own household pleasures need never be far to seek while you recall together things which happened years ago. 3. The best homes are also centres of personal religion. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them" all that God teaches you, all that God has given you to know of His dealings: tell those at home in the best of all speech, that of your daily example.—*W. R. Hutton.*

*The Lord's doings.*—1. Christ is ready to do all for His people that He consistently can do. 2. Christians are bound to tell all that Christ has done for them. 3. Why does Christ not do more for many of His disciples? Chiefly because they do not make an honest surrender of themselves and all they possess to Him. 4. Christians should seek to know more, experimentally, that they may have more to tell. 5. If Christians had more to tell of the Saviour's wonderful works in them, and were more faithful in telling it, our country would soon be brought to Christ.—*J. B. Shaw, D.D.*

*How the gospel is to be propagated.*—1. It is to be declared at home. 2. It is to be founded on personal experiences. 3. It is to acknowledge the power and goodness of God alone.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*What has Christ done for us?*—What is our present state as compared with our former condition? What is our moral tone? What is our attitude in relation to the future? If we can answer these questions satisfactorily, we have a sufficient reply to all controversial difficulties and to all speculative scepticism.—*Ibid.*

*Be fruitful.*—The first act God requires of a convert is, "Be fruitful." The good man's goodness lies not hidden in himself alone; he is still strengthening his weaker brother. How soon would the world and Christianity fail,

if there were not propagation both of it and man! Good works and good instructions are the generative acts of the soul, out of which spring new prosperity to the Church and gospel (Luke xxii. 32; John i. 40, 41, 45, xv. 16; Rom. i. 11; James v. 19, 20).—*O. Feltham.*

Ver. 20. *A thankful heart* can not easily confine itself within the narrow bounds of gratitude prescribed to it. There are some graces which are proper to be published; and there are others which ought to be concealed. It is just to publish those which, being preceded by heinous sins, cannot be ascribed to anything but the pure mercy of God, and which are visibly counterbalanced by our demerits. It is the safer way to conceal such as may be looked on as the reward of great fidelity in making a good use of those which a man has received before. The glory of God and the advantage of our neighbour are the rules to be observed on this occasion. He who does not publish them of his own accord, when they are extraordinary in their kind, and the example may be dangerous to the weak, shelters his neighbour's weakness under the veil of silence, and his own under that of obedience.—*P. Quesnel.*

*Marvelling.*—The demoniac's narrative would shew these people that it was not Jesus whom they had to fear, but evil spiritual powers to whose invasions their lives and habits exposed them, and would thus prepare them to receive with favour the preaching of the apostles after Christ's ascension and the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Ghost. The immediate effect of the missionary's story is related alone by Mark: "and all men did marvel." Such marvelling is the beginning of faith; it leads to consideration of the claims of the Wonder-worker, and acknowledgment of His Divine power.—*W. J. Deane.*



MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21—43.

(PARALLELS: MATT. ix. 1, 18-26; LUKE viii. 40-56.)

Vers. 21-24, 35-43. *Jairus' daughter.* 1. **The faith of a father.**—1. It was Christward. "Behold, there cometh," etc. He came to Christ when all human power was useless. He had confidence in the superhuman power of Christ. He had seen Christ cast out the fiend in the synagogue. He knew of the recovery of the centurion's servant. These mighty deeds planted the seed of faith in his heart. Personal trial was needed to make it grow and bring forth fruit. Afflictions are blessings if they bring us to Christ. 2. It was humble. "Fell at His feet." Jairus saw beyond the outward poverty of Christ. He, a man of rank and position, prostrate before Christ, conscious of his own inferiority. No place on earth higher than the feet of Jesus. To fall is to rise. Those who lie at His feet shall hereafter sit on His right hand. 3. It was earnest. "Besought Him greatly." He knew, felt, begged, one thing. The blessing sought was precious. Only Christ could give it. Jesus delights to hear passionate prayer. Each tear is a jewel, each cry an oration. Caesar said, "The voices of the distressed crying for my help make sweetest music in my ears." A father delays granting the request of his darling child, not that he is heedless of its appeals, but he likes to hear its little voice. Jesus often delayed to answer, not that He disliked giving, but because He liked the asking. 4. It was imperfect. "Come, and lay Thy hands," etc. His faith was inferior to that of the centurion. "Say the word only," etc. Healing while being absent a mystery to Jairus. Instrumentality not essential to Christ. The secret of success was in Himself. Distance no disadvantage. Now that He has exchanged worlds He is still the same.

II. **The death of a daughter.**—She was twelve years old, and dying. A very trying age in which to lose her. There was mutual entwining of affections. They had arranged for her future. They had promised to themselves much comfort from her. How insecure are the most promising earthly objects! Jairus' daughter, like a beautiful flower, fades in its budding. Her day closed early—night before noon. Her death full of pathos. 1. The death of a young daughter. 2. The death of an only daughter. 3. The death of a loved daughter. 4. The death of a good daughter. The fact that she was so beloved implies that she was all that could be desired.

III. **The sympathy of the Saviour.** 1. It was prompt in its action. Jesus was ever ready to sacrifice personal enjoyment for the good of others. 2. It was new in its sphere (ver. 35). It is implied that death is incurable. Jesus, the Infallible Physician, can cure the disease of death. His power reaches to both sides of mortality—this and other side. 3. It was contemptuously treated. "Laughed Him to scorn." What others called death Jesus called sleep; and as we with ease awake the sleeper, so Christ can awake the dead. Hitherto this power of Christ was unrevealed, hence the mockery. Their laughter was serviceable to Christ, for it proved the reality of her death. So Christ was no impostor. They unconsciously reared a platform on which He displayed His Divine power. 4. It was blessed in its results. (1) Resurrection of the dead. (2) Joy to the household. (3) Impetus to the truth. (4) Glory to Christ.—*B. D. Johns.*

Vers. 25-34. *The timid woman's touch.*—I. **Salvation is through Christ, not in human endeavours.**—Here was a woman who had been an invalid for twelve years. In that time she had faithfully sought the best medical advice to be

had, had done her utmost to obtain a cure, had spent all that she had in her endeavour to find relief. But it had done no good. It is not strange, indeed, when we consider the empiricism of medicine in that day, that this was so. To cure the disease of this woman there was a great variety of remedies. Among other things, she was to be set in a place where two ways met, with a glass of wine in her hand, and some one was to come up behind her and frighten her. Or seven ditches were to be dug, in which the shoots of grape-vines were to be burned, and then with a cup of wine in her hand she was to sit down in each. No wonder the poor woman "was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." This is the great lesson here: Men try to heal themselves of their sins by their own devices. They go to human advisers in their sense of need. One tells the sin-sick man, as Burns was told, to drive away his melancholy by gay company; another, as Theodore Parker did in Boston years ago, sneers at the idea of sin; another, as did Comte, tells men to worship humanity. Others hope by a pretty good sort of a life, as the phrase goes, to come out right, though without any very definite idea of how it is to be. Now, in opposition to all this, nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that salvation must be through Christ.

**II. Salvation is through personal effort, and does not come by waiting.**—There is danger of swinging from the error just considered to the opposite extreme, and doing nothing. Men sometimes make a wrong use of the doctrine of election, and persist in waiting for religious influences instead of coming to Christ without delay. They are practically fatalists. It was not so with this woman. She kept saying, "If I touch but His garments, I shall be made whole." She evinced determination and perseverance. No one will fail to-day who comes to Christ in a similar spirit. "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." God appoints us something to do in receiving salvation. We must at least reach out our hand for it and accept it. We must shew such a desire for it as to seek it. God does not want heaven filled with puppets, to move only as He pulls the string. He wants Godlike men, men to be holy as He is holy, and this can be only as each man in the sovereignty of his own free-will decides for himself whether or not he will accept the salvation of Christ. But further than this, as man is made, God could not force salvation on us against our will. Salvation would be impossible without an acceptance on our part. It would not be salvation, but punishment, to be forced into heaven if we did not wish it or enjoy it.

**III. Salvation is through faith in Christ, and not by mere contact with Him.**—Many are at church from Sunday to Sunday listening to the truths taught by the Saviour, without any personal interest in them or purpose to apply them. They are there from curiosity or habit, or because others are, and have no thought or wish to accept Christ for themselves. They cannot receive salvation in such a frame of mind. They must put forth the hand and touch Him. Contact is not enough. There was a spring in California where many came and drank. All admired its clear water and sought it in turn to slake their thirst. But one who knelt there with the rest saw what the others did not, recognised a vein of glittering gold lying beneath the water, put forth his hand, and made his fortune. The difference between the throngs in Christian lands, who do not accept Christ and those who do is a similar difference. The one fail to take Christ to themselves, though perhaps gathering around Him in admiration. The others see His infinite worth and eagerly take the treasure offered them.

**IV. Salvation is by simple faith, and not by elaborate works.**—We trust Jesus—that is all. The mode of expressing our trust is an insignificant matter. There was a certain young people's society which had a warm discussion as to whether in their meetings the voting should be done by word of

mouth or by a shew of hands. It was a question of absolute insignificance. The things of importance were that they should have a definite mind on the subjects considered, should make up their minds aright, and then should express their wills clearly. The method by which their will was expressed was immaterial, so long as it was expressed. So is it in regard to faith in Christ. It is of the utmost importance that we commit ourselves to Christ, but how that committal shall express itself is a matter of comparative indifference. We are like a party under guidance through a country infested by hostile Indians. Such a party is bound to follow its guide implicitly. It is its only hope. We must trust ourselves implicitly to the guidance of Christ. He alone knows what is best for us to do. He alone can guide us through the dangers of life, so that we shall come out safely at the last.

**V. Salvation is through Divine love, and not by any mystical virtue.**—The woman touched the border of Christ's garment, that white fringe attached to the blue ribbon which bound His robe. She went to Christ very much as many, two centuries ago, went to King Charles of England to be healed of the king's evil by his touch. But Christ called the woman out of the crowd and forced her to acknowledge her dependence upon Him, partly to teach her and us that He was personally concerned in her healing. It was not something with which His will had nothing to do. It was a result brought about by His knowledge of her need and her faith. She must see that Christ's aid was His free gift, and not to be surreptitiously taken from Him; that He knew her desire and freely and lovingly gave her help.

**VI. Salvation comes through confession, and not in secret.**—It was a sore trial for the poor woman to be called to make an acknowledgment of Christ before that unsympathetic company. Why, then, was this sacrifice required of her? 1. It was for the good of others. It is important that the world know that we are saved by Christ. Sometimes Christ did not allow His healings to be heralded, because it was not safe for Him to excite too much publicity; but generally He did. There is no reason now why we should not confess Him, and every reason why we should. I have somewhere read a narrative of the escape of a large company from Malay pirates in the South Seas. A boat was discovered by two or three of the captives. They could easily step on board by themselves, silently drop down the river, and so escape. But they could not bear to leave behind the large company of their friends held in torture and danger of death. So they went back, told their friends their discovery and the possibility of escape it opened, and urged all to undertake it. At night the whole company, including babes in arms, slipped out, passing sleeping guards, tiptoed their way to the river, and so escaped. We honour the few who risked all their hopes rather than leave the rest behind. There are striking points of similarity in our duty to-day. To be sure, we risk nothing in helping others to escape from their sins; but, on the other hand, to find the way of escape ourselves, and to be unwilling to tell others of the way when we have found it, is such ungenerous conduct that we can scarcely conceive it possible in a Christian. 2. But this confession of Christ is required, not only for the good of others, but for our own good quite as much. How much this woman would have lost had not Christ obliged her to confess Him! She needed just this to be confirmed in her assurance of permanent healing. She needed spiritual blessing as well as physical aid. She needed to take a stand on Christ's side for the sake of developing her character. She was thus brought nearer to her Lord. Many a despondent one, questioning his salvation, has instantly found peace when he came forward and confessed Christ by joining the Church.—*A. P. Foster.*



## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 22-24, 35-43. *Various phases of faith.*—1. Supplicating faith heard by Jesus. 2. Eager faith tried by Jesus. 3. Sinking faith strengthened by Jesus. 4. Thankful faith perfected by Jesus.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*

*Christ in His offices.*—View Christ here as—1. The Consoler (ver. 36). 2. The Revealer (ver. 39). 3. The Conqueror of death (ver. 42). 4. The True Man (ver. 43). 5. The Divine Physician, ready to apply to each applicant the remedy required.

Ver. 23. "*The point of death.*"—I. The point of death is **a point of mark**. The sound mind contemplates it, not as at a distance, but as at hand. The believer keeps it in his eye. He knows it is not the goal, but only the starting-point into eternity.

II. The point of death is **a point of moment**—a momentous point indeed. It is such when a man-child is born into the world, and still more so when he is born a second time. Surely it is not less so when the moment strikes that fixes his eternal destiny!

III. The point of death is **a point of interest**. Life is the seed-time; when death comes, it is harvest—the time of reaping, and of reaping that very kind of grain which we have sown.

IV. The point of death is **a point of reference**. It refers man to the future—to the hell from which he is to flee, to the heaven for which he is to prepare, and within the one or other of which his eternity is to be passed. When, therefore, you are reading the folio pages of truth and duty, study also the marginal references, and be ready to meet thy God.

V. The point of death is **a point of fact**. The disease which is to carry us off may now be in our veins, the place where we are to die is mapped off, the machinery of the providence is all set up, and known unto God is the moment in which the wheels are to go round;

so that man is as good as dead. It is only a question of a little time—so very little, that we may almost suppose it traversed.

VI. The point of death is **the final point**, the closing period in the last paragraph of the last chapter of life. It is the "finis" indeed. Does it not therefore become us to ascertain what kind of death we are all dying?

VII. In a word, the point of death ought to be **the point of preference**. There is no sin in Paul's estimate, that departing to be with Christ is "far better." Only we would need to see that our hope is on the right foundation; if not, departing must be far worse than to live, vexing and soul-harrowing as life often is. Your preference will not be unsafe, and unsound it cannot be, if you have by faith seen Jesus at the point of death, yea, dead for you. In that moment you have reached the point of life.—*John Macfarlane, LL.D.*

"*The point of death.*"—This is one point to which every one must come. The paths of earth run in very diverse ways, but they all pass at last "the point of death." It is a point that lies hidden from view; no one knows the day or the hour when he will come to it, and yet somewhere along the sunny years it waits for every one. Sometimes this point is struck in early youth. Even the children should think about dying, not as a sad and terrible thing, but as a point to which they must come, and for which they should prepare.—*J. R. Miller, D.D.*

*The beginning of eternity.*—O most dreadful point, which art the end of time and beginning of eternity! O last moment of life! O first of eternity! How terrible is the thought of thee, since not only life is to be lost in thee, but to be accounted for! . . . Admirable is the high wisdom of God, which hath placed a point, in the midst, betwixt time and eternity, unto which all the time of this life is to

relate, and upon which the whole eternity of the other is to depend! O moment, which art neither time nor eternity, but art the horizon of both, and dividest things temporal from eternal! . . . O moment, in which the just shall forget all his labours, and shall rest assured of all his virtues! O moment, which art certain to be; uncertain, when to be; and most certain, never to be again! I will therefore now fix thee in my memory, that I may not hereafter meet thee in my eternal ruin and perdition!—*Bishop J. Taylor.*

Vers. 25-34. *The faith of this woman* was—1. Secretly nourished. 2. Courageously shown. 3. Immediately discovered. 4. Humbly acknowledged. 5. Nobly crowned.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*

*By-errands in God's service.*—In His blessed path as the Healer He is ever willing to be arrested by the sons of men, counting this no detention, no trouble, no hindrance, but the true fulfilment of His heavenly mission. Opportunities such as these were welcome to Him; nor was He at any time too busy, too much in haste, to take up the case of the needy, however suddenly brought before Him. To Him no interruption was unwelcome which appealed to His love or power. I know not whether we prize our own *by-errands* sufficiently, our “accidental” opportunities of working or speaking for God. We like to plan, and carry out our plans to the end; and we do not quite like interruptions or detentions. Yet these may be, after all, our real work. Little can we guess, when forming our plans for the day, on what errands God may send us; and as little can we foresee, when setting out even on the shortest journey, what opportunity may cross our path of serving the Master and blessing our fellow-men. Whitefield, on his way to Glasgow, is drawn aside unexpectedly to tarry a night in the house of strangers. To that family he brings salvation. A minister of

Christ misses the train which was to convey him to his destination. He frets a little, but sets out to walk the ten miles as best he may. He is picked up by a kind stranger in a carriage, a man of the world, who has not been in the house of God for years. He speaks a word, gives a book, thanks the stranger in the Master's name for his kindness, and joys to learn some years after that he missed the train in order to be the messenger of eternal life to a heedless sinner.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*

Ver. 25. *Long affliction.*—It pleases God to lay long and tedious afflictions on some of His servants in this life. 1. To manifest His great power, strengthening them to bear such long afflictions. 2. To magnify His mercy in delivering them at length out of them. 3. That He may make thorough proof and trial of their faith, patience, and other graces of His Spirit in them. 4. To wean them from this world, and to stir up in them a longing for heaven. 5. To make them more earnest in prayer to Him for deliverance. It is therefore no evidence of God's wrath, nor any sufficient reason to prove such an one to be out of His favour, whom He so holds for a long time under the cross. Be well content, then, to bear afflictions, though of long continuance, submitting in this matter to the will of God, who knows it to be good and profitable for some to be kept long under discipline.—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 26. *God often the last resource of sorrow.*—It is a great piece of infidelity for men not to think of God in afflictions until they have experienced the insufficiency of human remedies. What a mercy is it to be forced to have recourse to God, by misfortunes, diseases, or the ill-usage of men! See here a representation of those physicians of souls who, not acting in the name and in the spirit of Christ, do nothing else but feed and increase their maladies. Men are very far from doing as much for the health of the

soul as for that of the body, and from giving all for eternal salvation, as they willingly spend all they have for temporal life. They are apt to seek out such physicians from whom they may suffer little or nothing, such as are likely to be most easy and gentle; and scarce will they hear speak of bestowing some slight alms. What wonder then, if such persons are nothing bettered, but rather grow worse!—*P. Quesnel*.

Vers. 27-29. *The means of grace*.—It was not the hem of His garment that stanchd her sickness. No; but it was the Divine power and the Divine love which lay beneath the garment. So with the means of grace; they are blessed to our souls because they are the channels through which the presence of the Lord Jesus comes to us to cleanse and to heal. The outward words of prayer cannot profit a man unless the heart rises with them. To say prayers without thought of God is to trust to an outward sign, not to the love and power of the Saviour. So also of the sacraments. The outward elements in the Eucharist are as the hem of His garment; we receive them in the hand and in the mouth: even as the woman touched His skirts. They are blessed to the soul, not because they are outward elements, but because through them there flows to us the virtue and the strength of that body and blood of which the elements are the Divinely appointed pledges and tokens and vehicles. And to this blessing two things are needful: the assured presence of Christ on His part; faith in His presence and in His love upon our part.

*Soul-sickness*.—By how much the soul is of more value than the body, by how much eternity outweighs time, by how much deliverance from everlasting misery and a title to eternal life transcend the comforts and pleasures of this world, by how much the favour and lovingkindness of the Lord are to be esteemed more than all that this earth can supply, just by so much is it

more the part of a rational and immortal being to be in earnest about the prosperity of his soul than about the health of his body.

*The distress of sin*.—Our sins and troubles are not so grievous to us as was this woman's infirmity to her; and yet they are greater evils. Our untempered, coarse, rude nature, our hard pride, our foolish running after men's smiles and praises, our vanity in all things, our misconception of ourselves, our mistakes and foibles, our foolish faults and sins—do they distress us much?—*H. W. Beecher*.

Ver. 29. *The grace of Christ* is the only remedy for all the most inveterate diseases of the soul. This will dry up the very fountain itself of sin, which is concupiscence, when the time of the perfect reign of charity shall come. It at present stops the course, the reign, and the dominion of concupiscence. The healing operation of grace alone can do all in a moment: the delays of it do not proceed from inability and necessity, but from dispensation and wisdom. When will it be, O my Saviour, that it shall drain in me the source of all sin, that it shall dry up that fountain of corruption and iniquity which I carry in my flesh and in my heart?—*P. Quesnel*.

Vers. 30-34. *Love in detection*.—It was love, not harshness, which made the Lord detect this woman, who had, as it were, stolen from Him a blessing. Her faith was weak, and He would strengthen it. He would not suffer her to go away to her home without confessing Him as her Healer, and rendering Him thanks. He wished to give her His best blessing; she had only received a foretaste. Her humility might seem cowardice, and He would make her brave. Her silence might be want of gratitude, and He would teach her thankfulness. Not yet had she heard His voice or fully known all His love. But now that He has seen her and called her to Him, she is no longer timid, for she has "told before



all the multitude for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately"; and then the words are spoken which bring her His fullest blessing: "daughter," etc.—*Bishop Blunt.*

*Sought out.*—Not because He did not know her did He seek her out, but because those who were with Him did not know her, and because He would not have her lose the honour, nor them the benefit, which the manifestation of her faith and its success might yield. This detection and manifestation were not designed to make her a gazing-stock, but to set her forth as an example and pattern, which might encourage others to come to the same almighty and exhaustless Fountain of strength and love for higher benefits and more spiritual gifts.

Ver. 31. *Two kinds of touch.*—It is not because we surround and follow after Christ, in frequenting the services and even the sacraments of the Church, thronging to its teaching, interesting ourselves and taking our part in its works of piety and charity, sharing loudly and warmly in its controversies, watching closely its movements, rejoicing in its progress, and lamenting over its checks and hindrances—it is not because we do all this, and even more, that we are justified in taking ourselves out of the class of mere spectators of the redemptive work. As it must be a particular kind of wire to draw down the electric current from the thunder-cloud, so it is only a special kind of touch—the touch of faith—which draws forth healing virtue from Christ.

Ver. 34. *Not superstition, but faith.*—What some of us would have sneered at as *superstition* Christ here dignifies by the name of *faith*. We pity the poor deluded devotees who crowd to Lourdes, or eagerly touch a relic or bow before a sacred image—we pity them and laugh at them; but perhaps God sees more that is worthy of love

and Divine approbation in that faulty, superstitious worship than in our cold intellectual belief and our well-balanced creeds.

*Faith* is essentially a personal allegiance to Jesus Christ. Whoever is drawn to Him from any motive, whoever reverences and trusts Him in any way, touches the heart of Christian faith.

*Imperfect faith.*—Where this woman's faith was imperfect ours may be complete. She came secretly, distrusting His willingness, believing only in His power to help. It is our privilege to come boldly to the throne of His grace, knowing that He is far more anxious than we to heal every sickness of our soul, and that He has provided in the Holy Communion a blessed means of spiritual contact with Himself.

Vers. 35, 36. *Two views taken of the same case.*—1. There is the human view—the child is dead, trouble not the Master. Men see the outside; they deal with facts rather than with principles; they see the circumference, not the centre. 2. There is Christ's view—only believe; man is called beyond facts, he is called into the sanctuary of God's secret. We often put the period where God Himself puts only a comma: we say "dead," when God Himself says "sleepeth."—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Vers. 36-43. *Christ's simplicity in miracle-working.*—Our Lord in this miracle did His utmost to lower in the minds of the parents any sense of their obligation to Him for the kindness which He designed to shew them. He prepared it by a kind of Divine équivoque: "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." He would have it appear that He was doing nothing more than banishing sleep from the eyes of the slumbering damsel; that by this means He might, I think, put to shame those persons who arrogate to themselves so much praise for their insignificant services; whereas He lessened the immensity of His benefits by His

modest way of conferring them.—*Segneri.*

Ver. 37. *Secret work.*—Let us thus learn from Christ not to impart, except only to a few chosen persons, those works of God which we propose to undertake, for fear lest they should be obstructed. The Spirit of God would have us labour in secret as much as possible; whereas the spirit of the world continually affects noise and applause.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 39. *Sleep the image of death.*—Both are—1. Preceded by weariness. 2. Accompanied by a rest. 3. Followed by a waking.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*

*Why did He thus speak?*—Because so soon would He recall her spirit from the other world that it would be like an awakening from sleep—a sleep shorter than that of an ordinary night's repose. Yes; but the Lord meant more than that by these words. He meant that the death of the body was not death, but only sleep. The word "death" He reserved for something more terrible—the death of the higher, truer life, the death of the spirit. That alone was death in the eyes of the Lord of life. He would have men think little of the decay of bodily powers, or of the corruption which followed on the dissolution of the outward frame, in comparison with the decay and death and corruption of the spiritual life. Death spiritual alone, in His sight, was worthy of the name of death, because life spiritual alone was worthy of the name of life.—*Bishop Blunt.*

Ver. 40. *Jesus with the dead.*—

1. Notice, first, the solitude of Jesus in the midst of those men and women. He was the only man who had that great faith so that He could declare it. And how hard it is to be hopeful alone! A gloomy atmosphere depresses a man; the surroundings of mourning break the most courageous spirits. It was what Christ was which made Him able to stand alone; it was what He was

that made Him the Leader of the human race. In the world disciples were faithless, in the garden disciples slept, on the Cross His friends deserted Him. Let us not be too indignant as we read of those facts. It was the condition of His success that it should be so. It was by that that He shewed Himself the Saviour of men, the Incarnate Son of God. It was that which put Him in advance of every position which any son of man had ever taken. Separating Him from all others, it placed Him where all others could come up to Him. 2. Notice, next, that though Christ felt His power, and asserted it only more boldly in the presence of those hopeless men and women, that power could not or did not work until they had all been put forth from the room. It shews us the distinction between two things that we often confuse. Unfavourable circumstances may hinder, but they cannot kill, true power. We cannot do in one moment what Jesus did—turn out all adverse influences—and so we let them tell us that they are all-powerful. The actions of Christ among those men were tokens of all His action everywhere. When He prepared the way for that miracle, quickly as it may have been done, it told the story that His power is never more truly present than when it is preparing the way for its own perfect working. It is not what we accomplish, but what we persist in for our God, which saves us. However unfavourable your circumstances, hindering great accomplishments, however hard the battle full of stubborn enemies and hard reverses, however small the gleanings of our poor sterile fields, the faith that fought on the one and worked on the other shall work salvation, and restore to the life of God its Father the soul that was dead in sin. That is a gospel to carry to the discouraged millions of the earth, and by it to nerve them to new effort. 3. After turning out all the other mourners and the minstrels, Jesus took the parents of the child, and entered into the room, and brought the child to life. Those parents by their presence seemed to

form the connexion between the faithful Christ and the unbelieving world, for they had a relation to both. Doubtless to them the words of Jesus, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," must have seemed very strange; they could not have meant all to them that they did to Him. And yet their parental love must have fastened on them with a hope which did not allow them to join in the scornful laughter with which others greeted them. They found a response in the deepest feelings of their hearts, which no others there appreciated; and so their presence was no hindrance to that miracle-working power of Christ. And, doubtless, in those wailings a hope kept alive by a parent's love had yearned for something more, and was ready for it when it came.—*A. Brooks.*

*Christ's attitude towards earthly relationships.*—Such a deed as He proposed to do must be done in silence, and yet not in loneliness. The parents were there; He regarded their claim to be present. Parents are the natural guardians of youth and infancy. This act is not at variance with what He elsewhere says about leaving father and mother for His sake, nor does it contradict what He says about the division and conflict which He introduces into family life. Divisions can only exist, or at least be permanent, where the presence and authority of Christ are disregarded by the parents on the one hand, or the child on the other. Where His presence is desired, though at first sight He may seem to disparage or lightly esteem blood relationship, yet in the end we shall find He has cemented earthly relationship, and bound father to child or child to father by closer ties, not of earth only, but of heaven too.—*G. Walker.*

Ver. 41. "*Talitha cumi*" was a common term of endearment, used by loving mothers to wake their children. The old familiar words were what Jesus used. They seem to tell that in the glad waking, after the sleep of death, there will be nothing startling. It

will all be just as natural as waking now. The old familiar love which has blessed us here will greet us there.

*In the hand of God.*—If God vouchsafe not to take our heart in His hand, it will never recover from its sin. The sacred humanity is as it were the hand and instrument of the Divinity, to which it is united in the person of the Word. It is from this humanity that our life proceeds, because it was in this that Christ died and rose again, and completed His sacrifice. He is man, since He takes this dead person by the hand; He is God, since He commands her to live and to arise, and is immediately obeyed.—*P. Quesnel.*

Vers. 42, 43. *The order of conversion.*

—1. To rise, by forsaking sin, its habits and occasions. 2. To walk a long time in good works. 3. To retire from the world, and to keep silence for some time. 4. To eat the living bread of the Eucharist. One ought to take great care not to give this bread to a dead person. That which ought to precede this Divine food, according to the order here intimated by Christ, is, that a man should rise, leave the bed wherein he was dead, and walk in the practice of virtue, with such edification as even to cause admiration in those whom he had before offended and scandalised by his sins.—*Ibid.*

*Silence enjoined.*—1. It was better for the parents and better for the child to think, and not to talk, about this great blessing. It is seldom good, even for rulers and their families, to be the objects of interest, curiosity, and gossip. 2. The Lord did not want men to regard Him merely as One who wrought signs and wonders, healed the sick and raised the dead, but wished the report of His Divine teaching to precede or accompany the fame of His wonderful works. 3. The Lord would not needlessly multiply His marvellous works. Though the child's life had been miraculously restored, it was not to be miraculously sustained.—*Bishop Blunt.*

*The injunction as to food.*—It is often said that this is a proof of Christ's



moderation and reason in the use of His miraculous powers. He who raised from the dead gave no miraculous supply of food. The lesson goes still further, as it shews how the miraculous power goes on, after its first exhibition, to affect all other methods of work. They who before mourned her as dead were now to give her food as living. Jesus had conquered those who laughed Him to scorn; and now those who, by their faithlessness, seemed to shut the poor girl away from life, were, because His power had intervened, to do all in

their power to help her life. She was to walk through the world, meeting friends who once had mourned her, demanding and obtaining the tribute of their friendship in a better and richer way. So Jesus changes the world from a hopeless to a hopeful place.—*A. Brooks.*

*Eternal life.*—Faith itself and the new birth conduct us to eternal life, not merely, as once received, but as preserved (Luke xxii. 32; Acts xiii. 43; Heb. iii. 14).—*J. Milner.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER V.

Vers. 2-5. *A man in ruins.*—Can anything be more sad than the wreck of a man? We mourn over the destruction of many noble things that have existed in the world. Men, when they hear of the old Phidian Jupiter—that sat forty feet high, carved of ivory and gold, and that was so magnificent, so transcendent, that all the ancient world counted him unhappy that died without having seen this most memorable statue that ever existed in the world—often mourn to think that its exceeding value led to its destruction, and that it perished. It was a great loss to art that such a thing should perish. Can any man look upon the Acropolis—shattered with balls, crumbled by the various influences of the elements, and utterly destroyed—and not mourn to think that such a stately temple, a temple so unparalleled in its exquisite symmetry and beauty, should be desolate and scattered? Can there be anything more melancholy than the destruction, not only of such temples as the Acropolis and the Parthenon, but of a whole city of temples and statues? More melancholy than the destruction of a statue, or a temple, or a city, or a nation, in its physical aspects, is the destruction of a man, the wreck of the understanding, the ruin of the moral feelings, the scattering all abroad of those elements of power that, united together, make man fitly the noblest creature that walks on the earth. Thousands and thousands of men make foreign pilgrimages to visit and mourn over fallen and destroyed cities of former grandeur and beauty; and yet, all round about every one of us, in every street, and in almost every neighbourhood, there are ruins more stupendous, more pitiful, and more heart-touching than that of any city. And how strange would be the wonder if, as men wandered in the Orient, there should come some one that should call from the mounds all the

scattered ruins of Babylon, or build again Tadmor of the desert! How strange it would be to see a city, that at night was a waste heap, so restored that in the morning the light of the sun should flash from pinnacle, and tower, and wall, and roof! How marvellous would be that creative miracle! But more marvellous, ten thousand times, is that Divine touch by which a man, broken down and shattered, is raised up in his right mind, and made to sit, clothed, at the feet of Jesus.—*H. W. Beecher.*

Ver. 3. *The tombs.*—In the East the receptacles of the dead are always situated at some distance from the abodes of the living; and if belonging to kings or men of rank, are spacious vaults and magnificent structures, containing, besides the crypt that holds the ashes of their solitary tenants, several chambers or recesses which are open and accessible at the sides. In these the benighted traveller often finds a welcome asylum; in these the dervishes and santons, wandering mendicants that infest the towns of Persia and other Eastern countries, generally establish themselves, and they are often, too, made the haunts of robbers and lawless people, who hide themselves there to avoid the consequences of their crimes. Nor are they occupied only by such casual and dangerous tenants. When passing through a desolate village near the Lake of Tiberias, Giovanni Finati saw the few inhabitants living in the tombs as their usual place of residence; and at Thebes the same traveller, when he was introduced to Mr. Beechy, the British Consul, found that gentleman had established himself, while prosecuting his researches among the ruins of that celebrated place, in the vestibule of one of the tombs of the ancient kings. Captain Light, who travelled over the scene of our Lord's interview with the demoniac, describes the tombs

as still existing in the form of caverns cut in the live rock, like those at Petra—as wild and sequestered solitudes, divided into a number of bare and open niches, well suited to be places of refuge to those unhappy lunatics for whom the benevolence of antiquity had not provided a better asylum.

Vers. 11-15. *The demoniac's restoration.*—A victim of intemperance was dashing himself hither and thither at risk of life, in vain attempts to elude the monstrous phantom serpent he saw assailing him. Nurses and physicians were baffled. Opiates had no effect. The man must sleep, or he must die. A new physician was summoned. He entered the room with a huge bare knife, attacked the phantom serpent, fought it, drove it under the bed, while the cowering wretch watched every motion in an agony of alternating hopes and fears; stabbed it again and again, slew it, dragged it across the floor, threw it from the door, locked the door again; and the sufferer, with a great sigh of relief, sank into a slumber which saved his reason and his life. May not such an experience throw light upon the fact that Jesus allowed the demons to enter into the swine and drive them down a steep place into the sea, where they were choked? Certainly not until he had seen that did the demoniac sit at Jesus' feet, "clothed, and in his right mind."

Ver. 13. *The destructive character of sin.*—Satan's work is a work of destruction. Nearly seven hundred years ago Jenghis Khan swept over Central Asia, and it is said that, for centuries after, his course could be traced by the pyramids of human bones—the bones of slaughtered captives—which his armies left behind them. If the bones of Satan's slain captives could be piled up in our sight, what a pyramid that would be! Self-mutilation has always been common among the worshippers of false gods; to this day the fakirs of India cut and gnash themselves with knives. The devil sets his servants at the same unprofitable task. Aloted-Din, the chief of the Assassins, succeeded in persuading his men that whoever would fall in his service was sure of paradise; and so, at a nod of their chief, the poor dupes would stab themselves to the heart, or fling themselves over precipices. Satan's one aim is to blind his captives, and lead them to self-destruction.

Vers. 15, 16. *Transforming influence of Christianity.*—A young man, an apprentice in an extensive tin factory in Massachusetts, who had formerly been very profligate, having applied for admission into a Church, the minister called on his master to inquire whether any change had been wrought in his conduct, and whether he had any objec-

tion to his reception. When the minister had made the customary inquiries, his master, with evident emotion, though he was not a professor of religion, replied in substance as follows: Pointing to an iron chain hanging up in the room, "Do you see that chain?" said he. "That chain was forged for W—. I was obliged to chain him to the bench by the week together, to keep him at work. He was the worst boy I had in the whole establishment. No punishment seemed to have any salutary influence upon him. I could not trust him out of my sight. But now, sir, he is completely changed—he has really become like a lamb. He is one of my best apprentices. I would trust him with untold gold. I have no objection to his being received into communion. I wish all my boys were prepared to go with him."—In a manuscript by an old Scotch minister, in the early part of the eighteenth century, there is a remarkable account of the conversion of Lord Jeddart, who had been famous for his recklessness in sin, and of the astonishment it caused among Christian people. A little after his conversion, and before the thing was known, he came to the Lord's table. He sat next a lady who had her hands over her face, and did not see him till he delivered the cup out of his hand. When she saw that it was Lord Jeddart, who had been so renowned for sin, she fell a-trembling terribly for very amazement that such a man should be there. He noticed it, and said, "Madam, be not troubled: the grace of God is free!" This calmed the lady; but when we consider what sort of man Lord Jeddart had been, we can account for her surprise.—Guthrie, of Fenwick, a Scotch minister, once visited a dying woman. He found her anxious about her state, but very ignorant. His explanation of the gospel was joyfully received by her, and soon after she died. On his return home, Guthrie said, "I have seen a strange thing to-day—a woman whom I found in a state of nature I saw in a state of grace, and left in a state of glory."—"When I get to heaven," said John Newton, "I shall see three wonders there: the first wonder will be to see many people there whom I did not expect to see; the second wonder will be to miss many people whom I did expect to see; and the third and greatest wonder of all will be to find myself there."

Ver. 17. *Rejection of Christ.*—Even so do men now deal with their Saviour. He draws nigh to us in His Word and Sacraments. He is close to us in blessings and in the discipline of life; but we will not have Him to teach us. We fear it may interfere with our plans and ways of life if we should become really religious! In many ways we "beseech Him to depart"—

some by wilful sins, which cannot be enjoyed in the presence of Christ. The busy, active man, who lives for this world only, has no time "to waste" on religion, so he bids the Redeemer "depart." The thoughtless, careless lover of pleasure, looking upon spiritual claims as an interruption to his amusements, feels no need for a Saviour and hears with unconcern His retreating footsteps. Alas! how many will, when too late, regret their neglect of, or contempt for, religion! A few years ago, the Prime Minister of England stepped across Downing Street with a friend, who wanted some information from one of the Government officials. They entered the particular office, and on inquiring for the Head of the Department were curtly told to "wait" by an insolent young clerk, who did not even look up from his newspaper, and presently added an order to "wait outside." When the principal official returned, he was thunder-struck to find the Head of the Government sitting with his friend on the steps of the stone staircase. Equally surprised was the clerk when, to his dismay, he learned by his dismissal the result of his careless insolence. In earthly things men bitterly regret "chances" lost or thrown away, and yet we treat with indifference our opportunities in the spiritual life!—*Dr. Hardman.*

*Folly of communities.*—Bishop Butler had a very poor opinion of the wisdom of communities. His chaplain, Dean Tucker, tells that he one day asked him "why whole communities of public bodies might not be seized with fits of insanity, as well as individuals," and on the chaplain declaring that he had not considered the subject, the bishop added: "Nothing but this principle, that they are liable to insanity equally at least with private persons, can account for the major part of those transactions of which we read in history."

Ver. 19. "*Tell what the Lord hath done for thee.*"—A young lady sat in her room one day reading her Bible, and came to this verse. The words rang in her ears, and refused to leave her, until she resolved she would speak to the first person she met on her way down town. Closing her book, she donned her wraps, and stepped into the street just as a young man, who was one of her particular friends, was passing. As they walked along together she tried hard to find courage to speak to him; but each time Satan would say, Wait. When they came to the place of separation, they lingered a moment, and she said, "George, I want to tell you about my Friend, one that has been so kind and good to me, and one whom you would enjoy to know, and whose influence you so much need." Her companion listened with unusual earnestness. "George, I want to see you under the care and influence

of my Saviour. Won't you, now, just give up all, and take hold on Him?" The young man was deeply impressed, and promised to seriously meditate on such a step, at the same time informing his friend that he would leave town next day to be gone some time in the interest of his employer. The young lady passed on down the street to attend some business, thinking little more about the young man, until, a few days after, when a small note was handed her, bearing these words: "Mamie, I accepted your Great Friend as my Friend too: am saved. Oh, how glad that you told me of Him! Your friend, George." The words were written as he lay dying in a railroad wreck.

Ver. 20. *Zeal in spreading the gospel.*—A remarkable case occurred in the Batticaloa District. It was that of a heathen who was employed in one of the mission schools, not to teach Christianity, but to assist the Christian teacher in teaching secular subjects. Being thus brought under the influence of the gospel, his mind gradually opened to receive the truth; and as soon as he had made a profession of Christ, he had a desire to make known to others the glad news of salvation. Week after week, and month after month, he walked six or eight miles to a distant village, without pay, to preach Christ to the people. The love of Christ constrained him to the work, and the result was that nearly all the people of that village received the truth, and a short time after the missionary there baptised on one occasion thirty-two persons.

Vers. 25-34. *A testimony to Jesus.*—At Cæsarea Paneas there might been seen, as late as the middle of the fourth century, a house, in the courtyard or garden of which was a group in bronze, consisting of a standing figure and a woman prostrate at its feet. Julian, the Apostate Emperor of Rome, commanded this memorial to be overthrown by his soldiers and destroyed. It was a monument that bore testimony to the faith he had renounced. The house was believed to be that in which this woman, cured of the bloody issue, ended her days, and the group represented the Divine Healer and His fearing and trembling patient.

Ver. 27. *No going back.*—When sinners sweep away every other delusion, and view Jesus as the only Saviour, they will persevere till they find. When Cortez went to conquer Mexico, he found that the soldiers were few and dispirited. The Mexicans were many, and the enterprise hazardous. The soldiers would have gone back to Spain, but Cortez took two or three chosen heroes with him, and went down to the seaside and broke up all the ships; and "now," he said, "we must



conquer or die. We cannot go back." When it is death or life, heaven or hell, pardon or condemnation, the sinner will be as determined and courageous as these poor Spaniards or as this poor woman.

Ver. 28. *The ordinances of the Church* may be compared to telephone wires, through which messages are all the while passing. You may climb up and put your ear to the wire, or hold it in your hand, but you will not hear a word of all the important messages that are flashing through it. But let an operator come with his instrument, and attach it, and he hears every word. So in the ordinances we touch the invisible wires that bind heaven and earth together. Along these wires messages are flying,—up from earth to heaven, prayers, praises, heart-cries, faith-filled desires; down from heaven to earth, answers of comfort, cheer, joy, and help, blessings of pardon, healing, life, peace.

Ver. 34. *Faith and omnipotence*.—Here is an exhaustless reservoir of power, the power of omnipotence, and the means by which it may all be made available to feed our lives. The mill-owner stores up in a reservoir on the heights the water that shall run his mill. Then he needs only a channel or sluice-way that shall bring the water to his wheels. If it were an exhaustless reservoir, like the Atlantic Ocean for extent, he would have no fear that his mill would run dry. These miracles and this text teach the Christian that omnipotence and omniscience alone bound the reservoir of his spiritual graces, and that he has under his own control the width and depth of the channel called "faith," which brings them into his life. When Franklin grasped the principle of electricity, he could not only draw the lightning from a single cloud—all the electricity in the earth and in all the clouds was at his command, and he could send it upon his errands. When James Watt mastered the principle of the expansive power of steam, not only the little cloud of vapour that issued from his mother's tea-kettle was under his control, but all the steam that could be generated by the stored-up combustibles of the world was really his. When the Christian can grasp this truth of the power of faith, the infinite spiritual resources of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are his. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." There is the reservoir. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive." There is the channel that conveys the power into our lives and makes it available.

Ver. 36. *God seeking to save*.—God beseeches men to be reconciled. He stands knocking—not we. Dr. Munhall in an address said there is not even a command to any sinner to pray before believing. A chal-

lenge came from a clergyman in the audience, who quoted Rom. x. 13: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Yes," says Dr. Munhall, "but read the next verse: 'How then shall they call on Him on whom they have not believed?'"

*The seeking Saviour*.—Mr. Moody was one night preaching in Philadelphia; near the pulpit sat a young lady, who listened with eager attention, drinking in every word. After he had done talking, he went to her. "Are you a Christian?" "No," she replied, "I wish I were; I've been seeking Jesus for three years." Mr. Moody replied, "There must be some mistake." "Don't you believe me?" said the distressed girl. "Well, no doubt you think you have been seeking Jesus; but, believe me, it don't take three years for a seeking soul to meet a seeking Saviour." "What am I to do, then?" "You have been trying to *do* long enough; you must just *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ." "Oh!" said the young lady, "I am so tired of that word, 'Believe,' 'believe,' 'believe!' I don't know what it means." "Then we'll change the word, and say, 'trust.'" "If I say, 'I'll trust Him,' will He save me?" "I don't say that, for you may say ten thousand things; but if you do trust Him, He certainly will." "Well," said she, "I do trust Him; but I don't feel any better!" "Ah!" said Mr. Moody, "I see; you've been looking for feelings for three years, instead of looking to Jesus." If the translators of the Bible had everywhere inserted "feelings" instead of "faith," what a run there would be upon the Book! But God does not say a word about feelings from Genesis to Revelation. With men "seeing is believing," but with the believer "believing is seeing." An orphan child was once asked by her little friend, "What do you do without a mother to tell your troubles to?" "Mother told me to go to Jesus; He was mother's Friend, and He's my Friend too," was the simple reply. "But He is a long way off; He won't stop to mind you." Her face brightened, as she said, "I don't know about that, but I know He says He will, and that's enough for me." And should not that be enough for us all?

Ver. 39. *Only sleeping*.—Is it no comfort to be told that the friend you thought to be dead only sleeps? There was a time when Christians took great consolation from this very truth—when it made them ready to die, and resigned to see those near to them die at the call of God. Go look at the catacombs of Rome, and see, in the records which those faithful caverns have preserved of the creed and life of our Christian forefathers, how the early Christians thought of death. The inscriptions are full of faith. Here a mother "*sleeps in Jesus*"; there a child "*sleeps in*

*Jesus*"; husband, wife, and friend—they all "*sleep*,"—there is no sign of death in the catacombs. And I would rather visit now their grim and unadorned recesses, with the feelings suggested by the simple stones which tell how faithful Christians died as well as lived in the comfort of their faith, than go into our gay modern cemeteries, with their costly classic, not Christian, ornaments, telling of the unrest of broken-hearted survivors, rather than of the peaceful sleep of the dead in Christ. Our martyred forefathers of the early Church may teach us how to live, to die, to bury, and to mourn for our dead. "*She is not dead, but sleepeth*." The sleep is long—it is too deep for us to break—our loved one may not be awakened by the call of affection or the cry of anguish; but still she only sleeps—she is not dead.

*Sleep—and death.*—There is in the German a beautiful fable which represents the angel of slumber wandering over the earth in company with the angel of death. As the evening draws near they approach a village and encamp upon one of its hills, listening to the curfew as it "tolls the knell of parting day." At last the sounds cease, profound silence reigns round about, and the dark mantle of night covers the earth. Now the angel of sleep rises from her bed of moss, and, stepping forward to the brink of the height, silently scatters the unseen seeds of slumber. The evening wind noiselessly wafts them out over the habitations of weary men. Sweet sleep settles down upon all the inhabitants of the village, and overcomes them all, from the old man who nods in his chair to the infant resting in its cradle. The sick forget their pain; the afflicted, their anguish; even poverty is oblivious of its wants. All eyes are closed. After her task has been performed, the angel of slumber turns to her sister and says: "When the morning sun appears, all these people will praise me as their benefactor and friend. How delightful it is to go about doing good so silently and all unseen!

What a beautiful calling we have!" Thus spoke the angel of sleep; but the angel of death gazed upon her in silent sorrow, and a tear, such as the undying shed, stood in her earnest eye. "Alas!" said she, "I cannot rejoice, like you, in the gratitude of men. The earth calls me its enemy, and the destroyer of its peace." "O my sister!" replied the angel of slumber, "at the great awaking of the resurrection morning the souls of the blessed will recognise you as their friend and benefactor. Are we not sisters, and the messengers of our common Father?" They ceased to speak, but the eyes of the death-angel glistened with tears as they both fled out into the darkness of the night.

Ver. 41. *Make for the higher.*—Nineteen centuries have passed since the Saviour spoke these words, but they are as full of meaning now as they were then to every girl who hath ears to hear. "Talitha cumi,"—My child, arise; get up from any slothful habit, from any frivolous, idle, selfish habit you have formed. My little lamb, mount up, be better this year than you were last year. Let His voice reach your innermost heart and awake you from the sleep of indifference. Not long ago an interesting memoir was written of one who heard words very similar to those which the Saviour spoke to the daughter of Jairus, and who acted upon them. An early friend of Catherine Spooner, who became Mrs. Tait, wife of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, remembers that in the flush of her bright girlhood, when every innocent delight was poured into her cup, she once told her how she had heard in her inmost heart, amidst all these joys and pleasures, a hidden voice saying, "Make for the higher." This aspiration and consecration of her life was never lowered. In the sphere of activity and social intercourse, where the providence of God placed her, "Make for the higher" hallowed and sweetened all lower things for her.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. *His own country.*—*Native place, or town:* Nazareth, the home of His youth. Rejected at an earlier stage in His ministry (Luke iv. 14-30), He now returns in the character of a Rabbi followed by disciples, and makes one more attempt to gain an attentive and intelligent hearing.

Ver. 3. *They were offended.*—*Scandalised*, a graphic word. Christ was to them like a *scandal*, i.e. a "trap-spring," or "baited stick in a trap." Their familiarity with His earthly antecedents blinded them to His Divine character, and hindered them from rejoicing in the liberty of the children of God, which He came to proclaim and to bestow on all who would receive Him.

Ver. 5. **He could there do no mighty work.**—The door was barred by their unbelief and moral insensibility, for God never forces an entrance, but always respects man's free-will.

Ver. 6. **He marvelled.**—For besides being "Perfect God," He is also "Perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting" (Athanasian Symbol).

Ver. 7. **By two and two.**—A detail peculiar to Mark, who in his list of names does not group the apostles in pairs as the other Synoptists do—an undesigned coincidence worthy of notice.

Ver. 11. **Verily . . . that city.**—Omit this sentence, probably imported from Matt. x. 15.

Ver. 13. **Anointed with oil.**—This unction was clearly sacramental—"an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given." It was both the symbol and the vehicle of blessings for body and soul. See James v. 14.

Ver. 19. **Had a quarrel.**—*Fostered a grudge.* Her inward enmity only waited for an opportunity to break forth in open hostilities.

Ver. 20. **Observed.** Or *preserved*, i.e. guarded him. **Did many things.** N, B, L, and Coptic read, *he was much perplexed*, which, however, hardly seems to harmonise with the next words, *and heard Him gladly*.

Ver. 21.—Mark alone mentions the three classes of guests: (1) Herod's political magnates; (2) the military dignitaries—"chiliarchs," i.e. commanders of a thousand men; (3) the grantees of Galilee—persons of substance and distinction.

Ver. 22.—The reading best supported by MS. authority (N, B, D, L, Δ) is that of R.V. margin—"his daughter Herodias, thus making mother and daughter bear the same name. It would not be a conclusive argument against this that this child of shame is not otherwise mentioned in history. The circumstances of her birth would condemn her to obscurity, and she may have died young. Against the common reading it may be urged that in A.D. 29 Salome, who was left a widow in A.D. 34, might perhaps barely (but not more than barely) be described as *κόρη*; while the other reading would throw back the beginning of Herod's connexion with Herodias to the year 20 or 21. This would then have to be reconciled with the history of his relations to the daughter of Aretas. Josephus says that at the time when Herodias joined him (which may, indeed, have been some little time after his first connexion with her) he had then been married to the daughter of Aretas for a considerable time (*Antiq. Jud.*, XVIII. v. 1, 4). He also speaks of the repudiation of Aretas' daughter as the *beginning* (be it observed) of the quarrel which led to the war between Antipas and the Arabian King in A.D. 36."

Ver. 25. **By-and-by.**—*Instantly.* Same word, *εὐαυρὴς*, in Matt. xiii. 21; Luke xviii. 7, xxi. 9.

Ver. 26. **Reject.**—*Disappoint, or break faith with.*

Ver. 27. **Executioner.**—The *speculator* was originally one whose duty it was to act as a spy or scout; then it came to be applied generally to any member of the armed body-guard of the Roman Emperor. Herod, who loved to imitate the customs of the Imperial Court, kept about him a company of *speculatores* to carry out his orders.

Ver. 49. **A spirit.**—*A phantasm or apparition.*

Ver. 52. **Hardened.**—*Become dull*—insusceptible and irresponsible to spiritual impressions. See chaps. iii. 5, viii. 17.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—13.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xiii. 54-58, ix. 35-38, x. 5-42; LUKE ix. 1-6.)

*The Master rejected: the servants sent forth.*—An easy day's journey would carry Jesus and His followers from Capernaum to Nazareth. What took our Lord back there? Mark seems to wish us to observe the connexion between this visit and the great group of miracles just recorded; and possibly the link may be Christ's hope that the report of these might have preceded Him and prepared His way. In His patient longsuffering He will give His fellow-villagers another chance. His heart yearns for "His own country," and "His own kin," and "His own house."

I. **We have here unbelief born of familiarity, and its effects on Christ.**—1. They own Christ's wisdom in His teaching, and the reality of His miracles; but the fact that He was one of themselves made them angry that He should have such gifts, and suspicious of where He had got them. (1) We note in their questions, first, the glimpse of Christ's early life. They bring before us the



quiet, undistinguished home and the long years of monotonous labour. (2) These questions bring out strongly what we too often forget in estimating Christ's contemporaries, viz. that His presence among them, in the simplicity of His human life, was a positive hindrance to their seeing His true character. (3) The facts on which the Nazarenes grounded their unbelief are really irrefragable proofs of Christ's Divinity. His character and work, compared with the circumstances of His origin and environment, are an insoluble riddle, except on the supposition that He was the Word and Power of God. 2. The effects of this unbelief on Christ. (1) It limited His power. The atmosphere of chill unbelief froze the stream. He "would have gathered," but "ye would not," and therefore He "could not." (2) He marvelled. All sin is a wonder to eyes that see into the realities of things and read the end; for it is all utterly unreasonable (though it is, alas! not unaccountable) and suicidal. To one who lives ever in the Father's bosom, what can seem so strange as that men should prefer homeless exposedness and dreary loneliness?

II. **The new instrument which Christ fashions to cope with unbelief.**—What does Jesus do when thus wounded in the house of His friends? Give way to despondency? No; but meekly betakes Himself to yet obscurer fields of service, and sends out the twelve to prepare His way. 1. The gift of power. Christ gives before He commands, and sends no man into the field without filling his basket with seed-corn. 2. Their equipment. The minimum of outward provision is likeliest to call out the maximum of faith. 3. The disposition of the messengers. It is not to be self-indulgent. If ever a herald of Christ falls under suspicion of caring more about life's comforts than about his work, good-bye to his usefulness. 4. The messengers' demeanour to rejecters. Shaking the dust off the sandal is an emblem of solemn renunciation of participation, and perhaps of disclaimer of responsibility.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 3, *a.* *Does labour block the way to manhood?*—I. "Is not this mighty worker and wise teacher a carpenter?" Well! and what then? Skill in handling the plane and driving the saw does not expel wisdom from the speech, love from the heart, and beauty from the life. The artisan may be the conqueror of himself and of his circumstances, a man of clear vision, high and enduring motive, and chivalrous philanthropy, as the sun may warm and fertilise the earth with one set of rays, and paint the "human face Divine" with another. It is undeniable that the Nazareth artisan is the true King of the ages and the rightful Lord of the souls of men.

II. But apart from the obvious and proved compatibility of even menial and monotonous toil with kindly feeling, generous impulse, strict integrity, and large usefulness, these disaffected Nazarenes might have dispelled their passion-fed prejudice by simply recalling the leading names of their typical history. "In the beginning" God had set the stamp of His approval on human labour, and all along had chosen as the chief toilers for the higher and spiritual welfare of Israel and the world those who were devoted to useful handicrafts or pastoral pursuits.

III. But it would be unfair to treat this jaundiced jeer, the outburst of the lowest and rudest thought of Galilee, as though it expressed the prevalent Jewish idea of labour. Far from it. Handicrafts were specially honoured amongst the Jews, and the occupants of the highest posts of learning and tuition were most familiar with the lower forms of human toil. The teacher of that Rabbi Hillel who died only a few years before the birth of Christ was in the habit of saying, "Love labour." Another Rabbi said, "Great is labour, for she honours the Master." A third, "When a man teaches his son no trade, it is as if he taught him highway robbery." And we owe to the family of the far-famed Gamaliel the

penetrating saying, "Beautiful is the union of the study of the law with some honest calling, for by the diligent pursuit of both a man is weaned from sin, but all study unaccompanied by work ends in vanity and draws sin in its train."

IV. Now the strange and inexplicable thing is that this insane prejudice against handicrafts requiring hard muscular work as blocking the way to the higher grades of goodness exists and operates amongst us in this year with a force it never had in Palestine, and produces mischiefs that are positively incalculable. Only lately it was seriously contended that men in the East End of London with a scant cupboard and a life of forced daily toil could not be expected to be Christians, and echoes follow echoes which report nothing but the deeply rooted falsehood that so long as men have to toil to live they cannot live to and for and in God. I do not deny the heart-ache of many a labouring life, the fierce struggle to exist continued in many a home, the unbroken dullness, the leaden monotony, killing aspiration and deadening faith, the brutalising conditions often associated with toil. I know the workshop is infested with corruption, the atmosphere charged with falseness and impurity, and that often the work itself is hard and rough and ill-paid. I admit the worse, but I cannot close my eyes to the evidence of facts, and I dare not be false to God's revelation of the sublime conquests possible to every man in and through Christ over the dullest circumstance or the most violently antagonistic lot. I am sure that labour is in the main wholesome and helpful, a defence from myriad temptations, a goad to usefulness, a contribution to the progress of the world, and perfectly compatible with the manliest life.

V. We might learn this from the long and thrilling history of toil at the back of us, for we have had apostles of labour like the brave Hollanders, who built their own country out of the sands of the sea, and created themselves into the manliest of men, and the most compact and independent of states by the act; martyrs to trade like Palissy the Potter; confessors and reformers like Richard Cobden, the manufacturer of calicoes; model men of business like the bookseller, Daniel Macmillan, and the "commercial" George Moore; and myriads more amongst the labouring poor, some of whom, I rejoice to say, I have intimately known and warmly loved, who, though they never gained any "social standing," "wrought righteousness, subdued the kingdoms" of self and of home, "stopped the mouths of the lions" of vice and impurity, "quenched the power of the fires" of intemperance, "from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in power" against domestic and social evils, and helped in turning to flight armies of aliens. Besides, does not everybody think Goethe is right when he says "an idle life is an anticipated death"? And must we not in our best moments admit that in spite of many drawbacks we owe lasting thanks to God for putting us where work is a necessity and a vocation the condition not only of a prolonged existence, but of a prolonged happiness? Labour is a benediction from God. Delitzsch, writing on *Jewish Artisan Life*, says: "All work worthy of the name is Godlike, for the world is one great whole in which everything acts and reacts. Each separate thing is but a stepping-stone to some higher end, and all things work out together the grand purpose of the whole."

VI. But it is in the fullest life ever lived—a life unequalled in its sweet dignity and attractive familiarity, tender strength and daring meekness—a life from which moral grandeur never departs—it is from it we get the strongest witness that "labour" does not block the way to manhood. That life is set deep in the forests of human toil. The pattern character is in the pattern condition, to use it, to redeem it, to glorify it, to adjust it to Himself, to exhibit the spirit in which a man may convert his surroundings into a set of "angels on the way of life," ministers inspiring and educating him, forces enabling him to partake more largely of the Divine nature.

VII. So far as we know Christ left the bench of the carpenter for the post of teacher and reformer. His work was His college. "He learnt obedience by the things He did and suffered," and acquired fitness for His ministry of brief but measureless energy, tender pathos, broad sympathies, and heroic self-sacrifice. The lowliest tasks well done are the best preparations for helpful ministries to the world. "Labour" is not only not a block to manhood, but it is the best drill for some of its finest services. 1. Read, I beseech you, the handwriting of God on your daily toil. "In all your ways acknowledge God, and He will direct you in your goings" for a subsistence. 2. Breathe into your work the spirit of beneficence. Do not stop your vision at its details, but range in thought over its large issues; and as Daniel Macmillan, when a bookseller's clerk, found solace from the conviction that he was aiding in the fight against ignorance and falsehood, and thus promoting the welfare of the world, so take care you never lose sight of the really helpful results of even the smallest honest and true work. 3. Be thorough in to-day's work. Do the thing well that is near you. Carlyle, after he met Arnold at Rugby, said of this model teacher, "He is a hero—a man who knows his work and does it." 4. Give a definite place to, and find special time and spheres for, the cultivation of your spiritual nature. Receive into your nature the power of Christ, and He will make the work of the bench a discipline for the consolation of the weary, the guidance of the perplexed, the assistance of the needy, and the helping of the world.

VIII. And is it from this religion founded by an artisan, born in poverty, whose apostles were fishermen and tax-gatherers, whom the "common people heard gladly"—is it from it and Him the toiling millions are turning away in indifference or despair? Do you blame the architect for the blunders of the builder? Will you censure the directors for the unknown intemperance of the "guard" that wrecks a train? Nor ought we to blame Christ Jesus for the faults of the Churches. It is not from Him you hear the cry that the weakest must be driven to the wall, the "fittest only must survive." It is not from Christ you hear approval of the tyranny of capital over labour or of the selfishness of masters in their dealings with men. He bids masters and servants alike be fair and just, and commands a mutual recognition of brotherhood in the kingdoms of toil, and breathes into men the spirit that ameliorates the lot of the wretched, and prepares the way for the widest and most enduring prosperity.

IX. Above all, beware of the strong illusion which resides in the commonplace. Familiarity with Jesus as the Son of Mary and brother of Joses, as playmate and fellow-workmen, closed the eyes of the Nazarenes to the spiritual meaning of His life, and barred their hearts to the entrance of His saving power. A similar danger is before us. Goaded by Strauss and others, men like Robertson of Brighton have compelled us to sit with fixed and profitable gaze on the MAN Christ Jesus. The pulpits and the literature of the Church are full of the blessed reality of Christ's humanness. Never was He more fully the Brother of men since He left the slopes of Olivet. But let us take "large views." GOD WAS IN CHRIST, transfiguring menial toil by faithfulness, obedience, and worship; educing from smallest seeds large harvests, and from lowliest deeds grandest issues; *reconciling* all things in our world to Himself, and to us, by reconciling us to Himself; adjusting all human relations, revealing the brotherhood of all men, penetrating our social life with the spirit of thoroughness and unselfishness, and so making possible a world in which every man does a full man's work with a clear spiritual aim, and so helps to establish a kingdom of righteousness and truth upon the earth.—*J. Clifford, D.D.*

Ver. 3, b. *Offended in Him*.—I. The astonishment of prejudice aroused.—



1. The prejudice of calling. 2. The prejudice of birth. 3. The prejudice of relationship. 4. The prejudice of familiarity.

II. **The astonishment culminating in bitter jealousy and dislike.**—Why should one occupying such a humble position and surroundings claim any pre-eminence over them? They could not deny the majesty of the life, the greatness of the deed, and the sublimity of the utterance; yet the ever-recurring question was, "Is not this the carpenter?"

III. **The protest which their astonishment and unbelief called forth** (ver. 4).—This was an old proverb with a new application.

IV. **The evil wrought by this blind prejudice in limiting the possibilities of Christ's ministry among them.** Human receptivity is one of the essential conditions of Divine working among men.

V. **The painful surprise awakened in Christ by their astonishment and unbelief.**

VI. **The good accomplished in spite of prejudice and unbelief.**—1. Healing a few sick folk. Poor sufferers were not shut out of His great sympathy, nor placed beyond the reach of His tender healing, by the unbelief of their neighbours. 2. Teaching in the villages. All that prejudice could do was to exclude its owners from the sphere of Divine operations.—*D. Davies.*

Ver. 11. *Punishments proportionable to sins.*—In these words Christ doth not wholly excuse those wicked Gentiles; but neither doth He charge them with so great a degree of guilt as He doth the unbelieving Jews. The Gentiles' gross ignorance of their duty might in some measure have been avoided by them, and was therefore justly to be imputed to them; but they had not the same opportunities and advantages of improving their knowledge, they had not the same means of conviction, they had not the same motives to reformation and amendment of life, as those men unto whom the gospel had been preached; and therefore, upon this account, our Lord is graciously pleased to make them as it were some sort of allowance and abatement. They are here represented not indeed as entirely blameless, but still as less blamable than others: they are not exempted from those sufferings that were due unto their sins; but these sufferings, we are told, shall be less severe than those which will be inflicted upon greater sinners.

I. **In the next world some sinners will be more severely punished than others.**—1. Though this doctrine had not been expressly revealed to us in the Word of God, yet our own reason alone would have inclined us to have believed it; for the same arguments that are brought to prove that any punishments shall hereafter be inflicted upon any sinners, may also be urged to shew that some sinners shall have a greater share in those punishments than others: the same vindictive justice of God which inclines Him to punish the sins of the impenitent disposes Him likewise to observe some proportion in His punishments, and to allot the greatest degrees of misery to the greatest degrees of guilt. And even if the justice of God were not so clearly interested in this matter, yet these future punishments do themselves suggest to us this doctrine; and from the nature of them we may very reasonably infer their inequality. One great part of the punishment of hell consists in the remorse of conscience arising from the sense of guilt; and therefore, where the greatest guilt is, there must be the greatest remorse, that is the greatest punishment, from the sense of it. Another argument to prove the inequality of future torments may be this—namely, that envy, malice, and other vices are not only by the order of God attended with punishments, but in the nature of the thing necessarily create torment; and therefore, where these are in the most eminent degree, they must necessarily create the greatest torment. 2. This truth will appear still more

evident if we consider the declarations God has been pleased to make concerning it in His Word. In the Levitical law God commands the magistrate to give the offender a certain number of stripes, according to his fault; and our Saviour hath taught us that He will observe the same method in the distribution and execution of His future punishments (Luke v. 47, 48).

## II. What those sins are which will expose men to the greatest suffering.—

1. These are, first, such sins as are in their kind most heinous—such as blasphemy, hypocrisy, murder, bloody persecution of God's saints, unnatural lusts, and the like. These sins are, in the kind of them, so open and so provoking an affront to the great God of heaven and earth, and are besides so shocking to human nature and to the first conceptions we are used to form of the distinction between good and evil, that a man must have perfectly rooted out of his mind all awe of God, all sense of religion, all regard to goodness, before he can harbour or encourage the least thoughts of them. 2. Those sins also will be most severely punished which are committed against the greatest light. The sins of Christians, of reformed Christians, of those of the best reformed Church, the sins of such who attend continually upon the ordinances of God, and come constantly to be partakers of the Supper of the Lord—such men as these have no pretence for their iniquity, no colour or excuse for their sins. 3. Those men also have just reason to dread the severest judgments of God who allow themselves in such sins as shew the greatest depravity of will—habitual, deliberate, presumptuous sins—sins which they take pleasure in, and love to see practised by others.—*Bishop Smalridge.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *Meaning of the word "disciple."*—I. The school.—1. They are in the kingdom of God (John iii. 5). 2. At the feet of Jesus (Luke x. 39; Deut. xxxiii. 3). 3. The law brings us to Christ (Gal. iii. 24). 4. To be in school is to be "in Christ" (Eph. iv. 21). 5. It is in the school that the instruction, training, and discipline take place. 6. "Come unto Me" precedes "Learn of Me" (Matt. xi. 28, 29).

II. The lesson.—1. The truth to be understood (John xvi. 13-15). 2. The Person to be appropriated (Eph. iv. 20; Heb. iii. 14; 2 Pet. i. 4). 3. The example to be followed (1 Pet. ii. 21; Phil. ii. 5; Matt. xi. 29; John xiii. 12-17; Luke xiv. 27).

III. The Teacher.—The Lord Himself (John vi. 45). 1. His wisdom (Col. ii. 3). 2. His power (1 Cor. i. 24). 3. His skill (Ps. lxxviii. 72, xxxii. 8). 4. He can teach the heart (Heb. viii. 10, x. 16). 5. He teaches us to profit (Isa. xlviii. 17). 6. What He requires of those whom He teaches

(Joh xxii. 22; Ps. xxv. 9; Jer. xxxiii. 8; John xxi. 22).—*E. Hopkins.*

Ver. 2. *Christian doctrine.*—1. Christian doctrine applicable to *all classes of men*. 2. Christian doctrine calculated to excite the profoundest *surprise*. 3. Christian doctrine always conveying the impression of *unique* power. 4. Christian doctrine shewing the insignificance of the personality of its teachers. Even Christ Himself, according to the flesh, seemed poor and inadequate when viewed in the light of the wondrous revelations which He made to the world.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*Individuality* of spirit, claim, manner, always provokes criticism. The glory of the highest revelation of Christianity is, that *personality* is superseded by *spirituality*. The speaker is to be forgotten in the speech. When both personality and doctrine are to be considered, the danger is that the former may be made to assume undue prominence. Instead of inquiring *What is*

said? the inquiry will be *Who* said it? Personality is a mere question of *detail* in comparison with the *truths* which nourish and save the soul.—*Ibid.*

*Lessons.*—1. Men may acknowledge and wonder at the spiritual gifts and graces which they see to be in others, and yet themselves have never the more grace, but be utterly void of all sanctifying and saving gifts of the spirit. 2. It is the property of carnal men to tie the gifts and graces of God's Spirit unto outward helps and means, as if the Lord could not bestow such gifts, or work such graces by His Spirit, without such outward helps. 3. So long as any remain hardened in their natural blindness and infidelity, no means will prevail to work faith or repentance in them, and to bring them to God, though the means used be in themselves never so powerful and excellent.—*G. Petter.*

*Unbelief.*—In our modern cant phraseology theirs might have been designated agnosticism and philosophic doubt. But philosophic it certainly was not, any more than much that now passes, because it bears that name; at least, if according to modern negative criticism, the inexplicable is also the unthinkable. Nor was it really doubt or agnosticism, any more than much that now covers itself with that garb. It was what Christ designated it—unbelief, since the questions would have been easily answered—indeed, never have arisen—had they believed that He was the Christ. And the same alternative still holds true. If “this One” is what negative criticism declares Him, which is all that it can know of Him by the outside—the Son of Mary, the Carpenter and Son of the carpenter of Nazareth, whose family occupied the humblest position among Galileans—then whence this wisdom which, say of it what you will, underlies all modern thinking, and these mighty works, which have moulded all modern history?—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

—Certainly; yet that refutes nothing. It only helps to prove the claims of Jesus to be the Son of God. If He had been a learned rabbi or philosopher, it might have been said He had received His wisdom from men; but as He was only a poor village carpenter, He must have been taught of God. 1. This tells us how wisely Jesus spent His youth and early manhood—not in idleness, but in useful toil. 2. It teaches us that there is no disgrace in working at a trade. Marks of toil are brighter insignia of honour than jewelled rings and delicate whiteness. 3. It shows also the condescension of Christ. Though rich, He became poor, and even toiled for His daily bread. It assures us, therefore, of His sympathy now with those who toil. It is a pleasant thought that the hands that now hold the sceptre once wielded the hammer and the saw.—*J. R. Miller, D.D.*

*The history of Nazareth has been repeated on a large scale in the history of Israel.*—Israel, as a whole, also made the nearness of Jesus, His “not being afar off,” an occasion of unbelief and fall. This temptation, resulting from the constant beholding of the Holy One with common eyes, was pointed to in Deut. xxx. 14 (cp. Rom. x. 8). It is the temptation which besets the intimates and fellow-citizens of chosen spirits and great geniuses; which besets theologians in the daily study and service of the truths of revelation, ministers in their commerce with the ordinances of grace, and all the lesser officers of the house of God in their habitual contact with the externals of Divine things. It is the temptation also of ancient towns and Churches, which have enjoyed exalted privileges, and indeed of the whole Church itself (Luke xviii. 8).—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*The offence of the Nazarenes* on account of Christ's humble origin a picture of all other offences in Him. 1. An offence—(1) In His terrestrial state and existence. (2) In His human lowliness. (3) In His brothers and sisters with their human weakness. 2. Yet an offence which will leave us

Ver. 3. “*Is not this the carpenter?*”



self-condemned, since it implies an admission of His wisdom and of His deeds. 3. A most fatal offence, since unbelief deprives us of the blessings of Christ's wondrous works.—*Ibid.*

*Lessons.*—1. This should teach us to be well content to be abased in this world for Christ's sake, seeing He, for our sakes, and to do us good, refused not to take upon Him so mean and low a condition. 2. It should move us to shew all humility towards our brethren in and for Christ's sake. 3. It should restrain in us all ambitions and covetous desires of worldly greatness, honour, wealth, etc.—*G. Petter.*

*The message more than the messenger.*

—If a message be sent to us from some great person, we look not so much at the person that brings it as at the message itself. So when ministers preach the Word of God to us, we must not so much have an eye to the outward quality of the persons that preach as to the doctrine itself which they deliver, the excellency and Divine authority whereof must move us to embrace and yield obedience to it.—*Ibid.*

Vers. 4-6. *How Christ victoriously contends with the unbelief of prejudice among His own countrymen.*—1. Prejudice everywhere opposes Him. (1) In an impure and a gross apprehension of His dignity, as of a magical secret doctrine and art. (2) In the reckoning up of all His earthly relationships, in order to urge them to the disparagement of His heavenly dignity. (3) In a slavish community of envious and low judgment upon His life. 2. How the Lord lays hold of and overcomes this prejudice. (1) He refers it all to a universal fact, which they might afterwards reflect upon. (2) He does not forget, but heals, the few who needed and were susceptible of help among His scornors. (3) He gathers up His influences, and withdraws. (4) He causes the light of His presence to shine brightly throughout the whole district.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

Vers. 4. *Lessons.*—1. Good and

faithful ministers of God are usually most subject to contempt and dishonour in the places where they are most familiarly known. (1) Envy and emulation cause men often to repine at the honour and preferment of such as are and have been familiarly known to them, and perhaps also have been heretofore their inferiors or equals. (2) Where ministers daily live and converse, they cannot but through human frailty discover some infirmities; and so their infirmities being most known in such places, hence it is that they are the more apt there to be despised. (3) The daily presence and commonness of a benefit are apt to breathe a contempt and loathing of it. 2. Honour and good respect are due unto God's faithful ministers wherever they live. (1) They are spiritual fathers (1 Cor. iv. 15); therefore to be honoured. (2) They are God's messengers and ambassadors (2 Cor. v. 20); therefore to be respected for the Lord's sake who sends them. (3) This wins reverence and authority to their ministry, causing it to be the more regarded, and become more profitable and effectual.—*G. Petter.*

Vers. 5. *The right atmosphere is wanting.*—Fire cannot burn in a vacuum. His hands, indeed, were laid upon a few sick folk, and He healed them; but the mightier work of healing diseased minds and troubled hearts could not there be accomplished—that required stronger faith.

Vers. 6. *Jesus wonders at that at which He would have us wonder; and He takes notice of our faults, to the end that we may reflect upon ourselves.* How much more strange and surprising are our own infidelity or unsuitable returns, after the instruction and miracles of so many ages!—*P. Quesnel.*

*Nature, causes, and effects of unbelief.*—I. *The nature of unbelief.*—1. Practical disregard of God's Word and Commandments is really infidelity. 2. Afraid to receive the promises of

God. 3. Fearing to take comfort from the Word of God.

II. The causes of unbelief.—

1. Voluntary ignorance (Rom. i. 19-21). 2. Wilful resistance of conscience (2 Thess. ii. 10-12). 3. A deliberate preference for sins (John iii. 19).

III. The effects of unbelief.—

1. It rejects Christ, the Lord of Glory, and therefore deserves eternal punishment. 2. It leads the sinner further and further away from God.—*H. M. Villiers.*

*The unbelief which comes between us and Christ* is that state of heart and feeling which dislikes the strain and trouble of thinking of things out of this present world; which looks away from what is out of sight and to come, and is moved and impressed only by what is just before it—immediate interests, immediate pleasures, common customs. It is the unbelief of carelessness, deadness of soul, lazy, selfish indifference; which cannot understand how any one can be in earnest, so as to take pains and suffer trouble for the sake of things unseen; which cannot bring itself to think that God is in earnest and the work of serving and pleasing Him a real thing. It is the unbelief which comes of wishing to save ourselves trouble, of not thinking it worth while to force ourselves to attend, to think, to remember, to lay to heart. This is the unbelief which comes between us and the power of Christ to improve us, to strengthen us, to comfort us. What we will not have done for us that He cannot do.—*Dean Church.*

Vers. 7-11. *The sending forth of the twelve apostles*, formally commissioned to preach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, reminds us of that noble and wonderful stream which Ezekiel saw in vision proceeding from under the threshold of the Temple, at first but a small rivulet not more than ankle-deep, but which, as it went on its way, increased to a stream knee-deep, then up to the thighs, and afterward to a great river for a man to

swim in, and carrying healing in its blessed waters whithersoever it flowed. Jesus is the True Temple of God, and in Him this stream of life rises, and through His apostles and disciples it flowed forth, at first a very small stream, but it has gone on widening and deepening until its waters have filled the whole earth, and whithersoever it has flowed it has carried life and healing (Ezek. xlvi. 1-9; Rev. xxii. 1-7; John vii. 37-39). To-day it is the mightiest moral force in the world, and there are none to sneer at it except fools and knaves (though many still oppose its onward flow), while millions all over the world and among all peoples live to bless God for His love and for His unspeakable gift in Christ Jesus.—*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*

*A beginning only.*—Mark significantly says, "Then Jesus began to send them forth": for ever since that day He has been giving similar work, and qualifying similar representatives. 1. To go forth from the presence of Jesus. 2. To be willing to work together. 3. To be content with the use of moral influence. Men are to be urged, not forced. 4. To exercise self-denial and cheerful trust in God.—*A. Rowland.*

Vers. 7. *Two and two* is a wise rule for all Christian workers. It checks individual peculiarities and self-will, helps to keep off faults, wholesomely stimulates, strengthens faith by giving another to hear it and to speak it, brings companionship, and admits of division of labour. One and one are more than twice one.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*Jesus sends out His disciples by twos.*—In the line of this need, and for its supply, woman, with her blessed ministries, is granted as a help-meet to man. He is made stronger and enters a larger and better life by her pure companionship. And this, too, outside of the sacred relation of husband and wife. They need each other's mutual help, and are uplifted in the relation simply of man and woman. They complement and help each other

to attain and enjoy higher good. In all this man's need of going out of himself and the healthfulness of the mutual impact of true natures are recognised.—*W. M. Campbell.*

**Christian friendship.**—I. **The power of Christian friendship.**—1. Sympathy: its immense help in enabling one to meet the difficulties, bear the trials, and do the work of Christian life. 2. Counsel: the advice of a wise friend, how valuable when in perplexity! 3. Love: its stimulating power.

II. **The beauty of Christian friendship.**—1. Its unselfishness, each striving to help and make sacrifices for the other. 2. The common pursuit of noble aims, the common interest of Christian life. 3. The exchange of helpful thoughts on great subjects, the intercourse of minds enlightened by the knowledge of Christ.

III. **The responsibility of Christian friendship.**—Like all blessings, it has its dangers. It can be misused—1. By weakly yielding to please a friend, instead of using the privilege of friendship to try to put him right. 2. By flattering a friend's weakness, instead of pointing out and helping him to eradicate his faults. 3. By that absorption in one another which becomes a hindrance to the real work of life.—*A. G. Mortimer, D.D.*

Ver. 8. *God's messengers.*—1. Such as are called of God to performance of great and weighty duties must free themselves from such impediments as will hinder them in those duties. 2. The best Christians may sometimes be called to a mean and poor estate, in which they may be destitute of necessities for maintenance of this life. (1) That God's special providence and fatherly care may more appear in providing for them when outward means fail them. (2) To try and exercise their faith in depending on His fatherly providence in their wants. (3) To wean their hearts from love of earthly things, and to stir up in them the greater love and desire of spiritual and heavenly riches.—*G. Petter.*

*Maintenance for ministers.*—1. It is not fit for ministers of the Word to be cumbered and troubled with the affairs of this life. 2. It is the ordinance of God that ministers should receive a sufficient maintenance from the people whom they are called to teach.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 11. *Lessons.*—When we see God dishonoured by great and heinous sins, we ought to testify our utter dislike and detestation of them, some way or other. (1) By an outward gesture and carriage (Acts xiii. 51, xviii. 6; Neh. v. 13; 2 Kings xix. 1). (2) By our words, plainly and sharply reproving such sins, and denouncing God's judgments against them (Eph. v. 11). 2. The contempt of God's ministers, especially of their ministry and doctrine, is an execrable and odious sin in the sight of God. 3. The sins of wicked men pollute the very ground on which they tread.—*Ibid.*

*Severity or patience?*—The whole conditions of work now are different. Sometimes, perhaps, a Christian is warranted in solemnly declaring to those who receive not his message that he will have no more to say to them. That may do more than all his other words. But such cases are rare; and the rule that is safest to follow is rather that of love, which despairs of none, and, though often repelled, returns with pleading, and, if it have told often in vain, now tells with tears, the story of the love that never abandons the most obstinate.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 12. *True repentance.*—1. Its nature. (1) It is represented in Scripture both as the gift of God and as the duty of the sinner. (2) It is inseparably connected with faith in Christ. It includes—(a) A genuine sorrow for sin. (b) An unreserved and ingenious confession of sin. (c) A firm purpose, through Divine grace, to walk in newness of life—a purpose that is proved to be sincere by the fruits it produces. 2. Its indispensable necessity. This is proved by—(1) The universality of sin. (2) The express command of God,



and the awful threatenings He has denounced against the finally impenitent. 3. Motives and encouragements to the performance of this duty. (1) The very call and command to repent may afford encouragement to returning sinners. (2) The Word of God is full of the most encouraging and express promises to penitent sinners. (3) The examples recorded in Scripture of sinners who obtained mercy, notwithstanding the peculiar greatness of their guilt. (4) The unspeakable happiness which awaits the true penitent in a future and eternal world.—*D. Black.*

Ver. 13. *Miracles.*—It was not magic that conquered disease and death. We must not assume that, because powers are beyond our own knowledge and control, they are therefore lawless and irregular. Order is heaven's first law. Jesus violates no principle in restoring the dead to life, but works according to some higher, unknown, and more heavenly principle. It is the kingdom of heaven overcoming the kingdom of darkness. The apostles, after Christ's ascension, preached One who had all power in heaven and on earth, who had come to deliver men from the plagues and adversaries tormenting them.

*Power in common things.*—There is a potency in the commonest things. God has ordered it so. He certainly will not ignore His own arrangement. Every cure wrought without the aid of magical art or imposition and

quackery, wrought with the aid of remedies provided in the earth and air, wrought wisely, honestly, scientifically, is a new proof that One who in other times healed the bodies and souls of men is still at work, that He still gives knowledge and insight to those who seek it, enables them to look into the condition of their fellow-men, and to be the ministers to them of His own blessed, healing, life-giving power.

*The healing art the gift of God.*—We may claim all true powers of the healing art and all honest studies in physical science as the gifts of God, ever intended to be the instruments of extending and proclaiming the Redeemer's kingdom over the earth.

*Credentials of authority.*—Throughout all the centuries Christians have been following in the footsteps of Christ in their ministry to the sick, the diseased, the devil-ridden, and the dying: thousands of hospitals for every manner of disease and affliction; nurses everywhere to care for the suffering; the white cross on the battle-fields; remorseless warfare against every form of evil, and successful warfare too. A Christlike life, sympathy, active and tender, with the suffering poor under all conditions, are the credentials of authority which Christ gives to us all now.—*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*

*The duties of a pastor.*—Here is an emblem of the several duties of a pastor—namely, courageously to prosecute incorrigible sinners, to treat the weak with mildness, and to apply himself to all with zeal.—*P. Quesnel.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—29.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xiv. 1, 2, 6-12; LUKE ix. 7-9.)

*Death and burial of the Baptist.* John the Forerunner, like the Master whose way he came to prepare, died by violence. Both died in the prime of life; both were slain by cruel hands. John had precedence of Jesus both in the time and the manner of his death; for while Jesus died as a malefactor on the Cross of shame, John died the death of a Roman citizen by decapitation. Moreover, while mocking crowds insulted Jesus as He hung in the agonies of torture, John's death was instantaneous and in the privacy of a dungeon.

1. *Faithful goodness on the part of the Baptist.*—1. John was pre-eminently a good man. The light of personal holiness shone in all he said and did (John

v. 35). When Christ challenged the Jews concerning him, no man durst speak disparagingly of him. The verdict of the whole land was in his favour (Mark xi. 30-32). 2. John's goodness was essentially *faithful* goodness. He had the courage of his convictions. He dared to press goodness upon a corrupt land, and to enforce holiness among a degenerate people. Wherever he saw sin he denounced it unsparingly, without respect of persons or consideration of self-interest (Luke iii. 7-14; Matt. iii. 7-10). Even the palace did not escape his faithful testimony to the truth; and as the truth was unpalatable, his adherence to it brought him at length to prison and to death. Ease, honour, and pleasure might all have been his, if he would but abstain from interfering with the guilty Herod; but these he regarded as but dross in comparison with a good conscience and a holy life. Nay, life itself he gladly relinquished rather than swerve a hair's-breadth from his loyalty to God.

II. **Cruel sin on the part of his enemies.**—1. In Herod sin gained power day by day. Though all history brands him as vile and despicable in his iniquity to an unusual degree, yet sin was not always so strong in him as it became at last. By self-indulgence it gradually mastered him, in spite of checks and warnings, and even of convictions. 2. Bad as Herod was, Herodias was infinitely worse. Terrible as it is to be a great sinner, what is that to being a great tempter? We may, from the force of temptation, be led wrong ourselves; but calmly, persistently, and in cold blood to say and do and plan things destructive to the welfare of others is diabolical. 3. Sin is always a cruel thing. See here how it so steeled the heart of what was once a woman that she counselled murder in the gay moments of a birthday feast. There had been days of innocence now long gone by, when Herodias was a girl, a child, an infant. As she played by her mother's knee, who could have foretold that those prattling, laughing lips would one day frame such a demand as this (ver. 24)? The various stages which led her step by step to such an abyss of inhuman cruelty it is not now possible to trace; nor is that necessary, for the course of sin never varies in its main features, but is ever the same,—as it flows on, it gradually carries all before it; it ever deepens, increases, hardens, and pollutes, until all high principle vanishes, every tender feeling is eradicated, all self-rule is destroyed, and the wretched victim is henceforth the slave of Satan, bound and tied by the chain of sin with which he once thought he was only amusing himself. 4. The hideous nature of sin is still more evident in the case of Herodias. For not only had she herself arrived at a fearful stage of cruelty, but she had brought herself to teach her own daughter the same. Can there be conceived a lower depth of depravity than that?

III. **Swift retribution on the part of conscience.**—The tragedy was soon ended; but its consequences were not so easily got rid of. "No matter that Herod was by profession a Sadducee, with no faith in the resurrection; his creed was forgotten in the superstitious dread which the memory of his crime fostered. The shade of the murdered prophet haunted him wherever he went; it followed him even beyond the seas; and the fear it engendered became a by-word and a proverb in Roman society, and furnished material for the biting satire of Persius,—

'But when the feast of Herod's birthday comes,

Thou mov'st thy lips, yet speak'st not in fear,  
Thou keep'st the Sabbath of the circumcised,  
And then there rise dark spectres of the dead.'

IV. **Last offices of love on the part of John's disciples.**—"Whether or not there be any truth in the tradition that Herod threw the head over the walls of the black fortress of Machærus, where the bloody deed was done, we may be

certain that his cruel paramour, when she had once got into her possession her strange plaything, on its golden charger, would never think of gratifying his disciples by giving it to them for decent burial. So that we may, with perfect certainty, conclude, in thinking of that funeral somewhere among the lonely wilds, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, that it was a mutilated corpse that these men took up, and that, wrapping it in the garment of camel's hair, with which they were so familiar, they tenderly and sadly placed in some cave of the desert. But we can well believe that, though in one sense not before them, that noble head was ever present to their mind's eye, with the flowing locks that had never been cut, with its tongue that had never faltered in its holy message, and its eyes that had never flinched before tyrant mob or tyrant king. The very fact that they were close at hand when those services were required of them, in this distant place, shews the depth of their attachment to him. If they could not share his prison, they could at least keep near it, and shew their devotion and their love by ministering to him even when he was in the clutches of the cruel Herod; and now, when the end had come, they were there, ready to do their part, tenderly and courageously. They took his body—his poor, headless body—and buried it. It may be that before they left, when they had carefully closed the cave in which their dead was placed, they rudely scratched upon the rock some epitaph in his honour. What was it? Methinks it might well be the words in which His Master bore testimony to him: '*Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.*'"

*Herod and John.*—General history is at once an entertaining and an edifying study. It brings before us human agents with their passions and pursuits, and arrests our attention, and promotes our advantage by the virtues and vices which it exhibits, with their opposite consequences. Biography, or the history of particular persons, is in a high degree interesting and improving. It is like turning the attention from a general group in painting, and directing it to a single portrait, where we not only mark how the colours swell from the canvas, but study the turn and expression of every feature, and arrive at a knowledge of the character and disposition.

**I. The weakness and degeneracy of human nature, by which we can be led to commit deeds which we regard as in the last degree heinous.**—In speculation, and when left to the unbiassed dictates of our own hearts, guilt is always the object of our abhorrence. In a particular manner inhumanity and cruelty strike us as crimes of a most odious description, and we shrink from them as disgraceful to our nature. But the cool convictions of the moral principle weighing the merit of actions in abstract theory, and the inflamed suggestions of passion rushing to its object in real life, are widely different from each other; and though perfectly friendly to virtue in speculation, we may be led in practice to the perpetration of deeds fearful for atrocity. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Be not high minded, but fear. Strive, according to His working who worketh within you mightily. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.

**II. The danger of bad counsel and bad company.**—Herodias was the evident means of Herod's great guilt. Of himself, it would appear that he was far from being an utterly depraved character. Though reproved by the Baptist, he had no wish to cast him into prison, nor would his anger ever have proceeded so far against him as to have taken away his life. But the artifices of her with whom he had connected himself in unlawful intercourse triumphed over his more amiable feelings, and in the end rendered him deaf to the remonstrances of conscience. Such is the usual effect of bad associates. If you have companions of this description, they will, how innocent soever or well disposed you may at



present be, accomplish your destruction by availing themselves of all your weak and unguarded moments. They will not desist from their importunities till they have estranged you from God, and made you instruments of their unhallowed desires and passions. What have they to give that can be equivalent for such a sacrifice? The pleasures of guilt which awaken a foreboding that is never laid, though the pleasures themselves perish in the using.

**III. The rapid progress of the sinner from guilt to guilt.**—Herod not only continued in unlawful connexion with Herodias, but seized John for remonstrating with them, and cast him into prison. With this despotical stretch of his authority he was not long contented. The servant of God and the reprover of sin must not only be deprived of his liberty, he must be bereaved of his life. Do not suppose that the complicated guilt of this monster of iniquity can never become yours. Look into life, both low and high, and tremble for yourselves. In the humblest ranks of society you have repeated proofs of the progress of iniquity. There you see the artificer and the day-labourer, in their aversion to toil, ceasing to work with their accustomed regularity. Idleness involves them in want, and impels them to fraud and rapine, and every unlawful means of getting money. At length they lay hold of their neighbour's person on the highway, and rob and plunder him, and murder him to escape detection. Ascend the scale, and you see similar results from similar beginnings. The libertine of fashion becomes at last fearless of God, and regardless of the rights and callous to the sufferings of his acquaintance. He contracts debts which he never intends to pay, ruins characters whom he promised to protect, seduces the unsuspecting from kindred and parents and home; and after being satiated with the pleasures of guilt, he abandons them without a scruple to poverty and misery. Extend your observations to the course of all the wicked, and you will see that when once men enter into the path of sin they seldom or never stop. But the vices not only spring out of each other, they increase perpetually in enormity. Herod began with an act of wrongful imprisonment; next he was guilty of a bloody murder; and, at an after-period, he surpassed even this complication of iniquity by insulting the last moments of Christ, and delivering Him into the hands of His enemies to be crucified as a traitor and blasphemer. Guard your heart; guard and fence your conduct; and beware of the repetition of any heinous act as certain to lead you to another still more heinous, till it end you in the extremity of guilt.

**IV. The unspeakable terrors of an awakened conscience.**—Impelled by passion and appetite, you may despise the monitor within, and rush on fearless of consequences. But all this obstinacy and intrepidity neither alters the nature of guilt nor ends the supremacy of conscience. The power of this moral ruler is suspended, not destroyed; and the recovery of its ascendancy will prove to you most terrible. Then it will bring up your crimes, and marshal them in battle-array against you; and as the supposed return of the beheaded Baptist into life disturbed the heart of the king who murdered him, so shall they rack your soul with unspeakable horrors, and distract and drive you mad, with the prospect of final damnation.—*W. Thorburn.*

*Imperfect reformation insufficient.*—**Herod's proficiency in matter of religion.**—1. Herod's preservation of John Baptist's life, and sheltering and protecting him against Herodias' malice. Wicked and unregenerate men may take such a liking to the Word of God, and be so affected with it, as to become maintainers and protectors and defenders of the servants of God that minister it to them. 2. The Word of God may so far prevail upon an unregenerate man as to work in him a fear and an awful regard, and to captivate him to the authority of religion in the servants of God. (1) Did Herod stand in fear of John? 'Tis

then no evidence of piety and goodness not to do evil for fear of others. (2) Did Herod fear John, and keep within some compass and bounds of moderation because of John? In what case are they that are of his temper in the gospel, that could boast and profess that he neither feared God nor revered man? Licentious, audacious, profane wretches, such as those graceless Jews were, that, when they saw Stephen's face shine like an angel, yet durst oppose him and offer violence to him. 3. A third effect that was wrought in Herod towards John Baptist is a worthy esteem and acknowledgment of John's piety and sanctity, and those graces that were in him; he accounted him a just man and holy. Carnal and unconverted and sensual men yet can come thus far, as to have the virtues and graces that shine in others in a fair esteem and in some admiration. 4. There is a fourth effect wrought in Herod towards John Baptist—that is a reverent behaviour towards him. He observed him, had a care to please him in his demeanour; he would be loath to offend him as little as he could. A carnal, unconverted man may be so affected towards religion as to be willing to accommodate his carriage to the best content of the servants of God. 5. A fifth effect of John's ministry in Herod is a willing attention to his preaching. "He heard him gladly." Even an unregenerate man, living in a state of sensuality, may be a diligent, and constant, and willing, and ready frequenter of the preaching of the Word. 6. There is yet a further step of proficiency in Herod that was a very specious conformity to St. John's doctrine. "He did many things"—yielded obedience to many instructions. An unregenerate man may come thus far, as to be won and persuaded by the Word to the performance of many good duties. Herod, it seems, yielded obedience to John's preaching in many particulars. (1) In his private conversation 'tis like he abstained from some vicious courses. (2) In his public administration and government he listened to John in reforming of abuses, made many good laws for the well-ordering of his kingdom and repressing of vices. (3) Was not wanting in ecclesiastical affairs. He countenanced John's preaching, and assisted him against gainsayers and opposers. He did not only hear him gladly, but was persuaded by him to do, yea to do many things in conformity to his doctrine. 'Tis much to come thus far, not only to afford him audience, but to perform obedience: not to rest in the notional part, but to make some progress in the practical part of religion. Yet so did Herod and many others that never attained to true conversion, and so fell short of life and salvation.

**11. The insufficiency of this his progress, and wherein it failed and came short.**—1. For his esteem and regard of John's person and piety. 'Tis very questionable, as unsound, upon the suspicion of those false grounds, from which it did arise; and we may see three suspicious grounds of it. (1) The first suspicious ground of this high esteem of John we may justly conceive was popularity. When religion is in request and grown into fashion, and becomes a matter of reputation, 'tis no great matter then to become an admirer and honourer of it. (2) A second suspicious ground of Herod's respect to John that makes it insufficient is policy. Herod was a fox, as our Saviour terms him. He thought it safe to hold in with John, to get him to the court, and to put countenance upon him; it would satisfy the people well. (3) To make the best of it, a third ground of Herod's good respect to John, that makes his proficiency to be insufficient, might be a natural ingenuity, a remainder of right reason and common honesty, which might be in Herod, and might move him to think well of John Baptist, and esteem worthily of him. Besides those things that are truly and properly spiritual, there are some excellences that do accompany piety and religion, that may be apprehended and well esteemed by mere natural men; and accordingly their natural ingenuity will affect and approve them, though they have no true relish of that which is indeed spiritual

in piety and religion: thus deceiving their own hearts as if they loved religion for the sanctity of it. St. Gregory speaks excellently to this purpose: "Many a man deceives himself, and thinks he loves that in religion which indeed he loves not, but some other thing for it." (a) Natural ingenuity will see and discern a great deal of innocence in religion. True piety and Christianity will make Christians unblamable, inoffensive, and of a harmless conversation, so that they gain a good report of them that are without. (b) Ingenuity observes a great deal of utility and profitableness in religion. Good Christians are not only harmless and inoffensive, but they are useful and helpful, and beneficial to the times and places wherein they live. (c) Ingenuity can observe a great deal of beauty and comeliness in religion. Piety, when it appears in the life of a Christian, is exceedingly lovely; as Solomon speaks, it makes the face to shine. It was not John's piety that relished with Herod, but these *condimenta pietatis* which were as sauces and sweetenings unto it.

2. His diligent attention to John's preaching and ministry: he heard him gladly. But even this forwardness falls short and will appear insufficient upon two suspicions. (1) We have just cause to suspect his disposition out of which he did it. (a) All this his forwardness in hearing, it was but a passion, a pleasure, and a delight that he took, and that brought him on to give John the hearing. (b) His delight and joy was too forward. Some other motion and affection should have been stirred up in him. No question, John's preaching, had it been suffered to work kindly, would have stirred up fear, and care, and sorrow, and repentance, and humiliation: we hear of none of these; but only Herod's fancy was taken, and begat delight in him. The matter of salvation, 'tis not a jocund and a sporting work; it must be wrought out with fear and trembling. (c) He delighted in John's preaching with the same affection that he shewed in other things. John preaches, and he pleases him; Herodias dances, and she pleases him,—no difference. A religious man, even in outward delights, rejoices spiritually; a carnal man, even in spiritual things, rejoices carnally. (d) It was a passion of joy in hearing the Word; but it was yet controllable, and easily overcome by another delight. His birthday joy, and his delight he takes in the damsel's dancing, hath exceeded and overcome all the delight he took in John. Was Herod ever so much taken with John's preaching as to yield to him so great a suit as he granted to his minstrel? (2) The motives that made him thus attentive are very suspicious. (a) Was 'it not the novelty of John's teaching that did thus delight him? Let John hold on for some time, all this forwardness will cool again. 'Tis but the crackling of thorns in the fire; a sudden blaze for a time, and soon out again. (b) Was it not some generality of truth that might give Herod content? No doubt John had many deep discourses in matters of divinity about the nature of God and the controversies of the times. And Herod can hear these discourses gladly. There is in many men a kind of spiritual lust in their understanding, that is much pleased with such high strains and contemplative discourses. (c) 'Tis like John's preaching cleared a great doubt and scruple in Herod's mind concerning the Messiah that had much troubled him. That Christ's kingdom was not of this world, that Christianity teaches obedience to worldly powers and potentates, doth not disturb them, much less destroy them—this doctrine was welcome to Herod; he heard it gladly. (d) John had his thunders against the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the priests, and scribes, and doctors of the law; he was a sharp reprove of vice and disorders; he taught the soldiers to be content with their wages, and not to mutiny. And Herod could hear other men's faults taxed and reproved; it was music to him. (e) Were there not some personal excellences in John's preaching that Herod delighted in—his wit, or elocution, or some graceful delivery?

3. The third thing considerable is



Herod's conformity to John's preaching; he yielded to his doctrine in many things, and submitted to it. He was not a bare auditor, gave John the hearing only, but made some progress in practice too. John's preaching prevailed with him, and made him do many things. Now, surely, a very specious conformity, had it not some suspicions and failings in it. (1) This conformity is suspicious, because (a) These many things which Herod did, they were some light, easy performances. He put himself to no great pain in this doing or forbearing. Canst thou mortify thy dearest sins, cross thy lusts, and strive against them? work thyself to the practice of those good duties that are painful and laborious? Such a conformity argues truth of grace in thee. (b) These many things which Herod did, 'tis like they were some plausible performances that the world will take notice of and speak well of; such make for Herod's reputation in the world, and you may win him unto them. But try Herod with the more inward and private and secret parts of piety, that men cannot discern or take notice of; thy secret devotion and prayer to God, thy daily bewailing thy sins 'twixt God and thine own conscience, and the strivings of thy soul against sinful inclinations, thine alms in secret, as Christ directs,—oh! these make no noise, they are not matter of ostentation; and so Herod forbears them. (c) These many things that Herod did might be some civil and public and outward administrations, the redress of public abuses, some good orders published and enjoyed. No doubt many an honest cause sped the better for John, the course of justice went on more speedily. These good duties put Herod to no great trouble or pain. 'Tis more hard to mortify one bosom sin that thy soul delights in, than to bring thyself to the outward performance of the whole law of God. (2) As the obedience of Herod was suspicious, so we find it to be failing and defective. He did many things, but yet fell short; he failed in other things; he dispensed with himself for some sins which he would not part with. This he would do, but that he would not do. 'Twas like Naaman's conversion; he promises some duties in religion, but sues for a dispensation in others. "Herein God be merciful to me: this sin I cannot part with." Whereas entire and universal obedience is only acceptable and of account with God (Ps. cxix. 6). Satan knows this so well that he can be content to have us yield to God in many things, only be true to Satan in some one thing. He knows one dram of poison may spoil all the wholesome ingredients, and make them deadly. One dead fly may taint the most precious ointment, saith Solomon. One sin unrepented of and retained in practice, the cherishing of one lust, will corrupt all other laudable and commendable duties. "As a bird," saith Chrysostom, "if the snare catch but one of her feet, though her wings be free and ready for flight, yet she is taken, and becomes a prey to the fowler." Or as Augustine compares it, "Though all the parts of our body be sound, save only one, that one diseased and ulcerous part may be deadly to thee. All the sound members cannot preserve life; but even one diseased member shall hasten thy death." (a) See John's fidelity. For all Herod's forwardness, he will not abate him the commission of one gross sin. (b) See John's simplicity. A politic man would have winked at this one fault of Herod, thought it wisdom to preserve his interest with Herod. "I may prevail much with him, if I hold good terms with him; many good causes may speed the better, if I hold fair with Herod; but to deal roughly with him, and affront him in his sin, may set him farther off—no good shall be done with him." No; John's piety abhors this policy. God allows no such compliances upon any such pretences. (c) See John's importunity in admonishing of Herod. He tells him plainly of his sin. John must do his duty, though it cost him the loss of Herod's favour—ay, and his life too. And so it did; and that will give you to see Herod's deficiency, to what he falls, even to open persecution.

**Lessons.**—1. Bare formality in matters of religion is not lasting. It will wear off—like some waterish colours that are lightly laid on, will fade and vanish, are of no continuance. 2. One unmortified sin wilfully retained will eat out all appearances of virtue and piety. 3. An unmortified sin, rather than be crossed, will fall to persecution. Reigning sins will at last prove raging sins, and grow impatient of any reproof. Cast pearls and precious truths before fierce dogs, they will not only trample them under their feet, but will rend and worry you (Matt. vii. 6). This is the dreadful downfall of unsoundness in religion. A false friend to religion will at last prove an open enemy to it.—*Bishop Brownrigg.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 14. *Lessons.*—1. The innocence and uprightness of God's faithful servants are of great power to strike terror into their wicked enemies, and that not only while living, but even after their death. (1) The best way for God's servants to dismay their enemies is to walk in holiness and innocence of life. (2) Beware of offering wrong to any innocent and holy servant of God, lest thy conscience terrify thee for it. 2. This is one effect and property of a guilty conscience: to disquiet and vex the heart with great terrors and fears—yea, often with vain fears for which there is no cause (Job xv. 21; Isa. lvii. 20; Deut. xxviii. 65; Lev. xxvi. 36; Prov. xxviii. 1). 3. Sin once committed lies heavy on the conscience, accusing and troubling it long afterwards (Gen. xlii. 21; Ps. xxv. 7). 4. Murder, or shedding of innocent blood, is such a sin as will lie heavy on the conscience of those guilty of it, breeding great terror to them (Gen. iv. 13; Ps. li. 14).—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 15. *The speculators of society.*—Conscience is hardly concerned in their case. They give themselves to the consideration of mere problems or puzzles. They represent, too, the persons who can talk about religious *subjects* without having any religious *feeling*. Religion is to them only a topic of the day. It is something to be remarked upon, and then dropped in favour of something else. There are men around ourselves who suppose that to admire a preacher is to admire Christ, and that to be

critical about sermons is to be concerned about truth.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*The judgment of the world* is very uncertain in all things, but extremely blind in those which relate to God. There are no conjectures so extravagant but men will have recourse to them rather than believe the Word of God: so corrupt is the heart of man, so true is it, that blindness is the just punishment of incredulity. These Jews, in their several judgments, afford us a lively representation of those pretended masters of reason who affect always singularity in their opinions, and who believe everything except truth.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 16. *Conscience.*—1. Conscience will not be silenced by wealth or earthly surroundings. 2. A guilty conscience is troubled with not only real but imaginary troubles. 3. A guilty conscience will torment a man in spite of his avowed religious belief.—*T. Kelly.*

*Conscience bribed.*—We all of us do evil things that it is not hard for us to seem to forget, and with regard to which it is not hard for us to bribe or to silence our memories and our consciences. The hurry and bustle of daily life, the very weakness of our characters, the rush of sensuous delights, may make us blind and deaf to the voice of conscience; and we think that all chance of the evil deed rising again to harm us is past. But some trifle touches the hidden spring by mere accident. As in the old story of the man groping along a wall, till his finger

happened to fall upon one inch of it, and immediately the hidden door flies open and there is the skeleton, so with any of us some merely fortuitous association may freshen faded memories and wake a dormant conscience. An apparently trivial circumstance, like some hooked pole pushed at random into the sea, may bring up by the locks some pale and drowned memory long plunged in an ocean of oblivion.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*Unbelief and superstition.*—There is a very close connexion, as all history proves, between theoretical disbelief in a future life and spiritual existence and superstition. So strong is the bond that unites men with the unseen world, that if they do not link themselves with that world in the legitimate and true fashion, it is almost certain to avenge itself upon them by leading them to all manner of low and abject superstitions. Spiritualism is the disease of a generation that disbelieves in another life. The French Revolution with its infidelities was also the very seed-field for all manner of quacks and impostors such as Cagliostro and the like. The time when Christ lived presented precisely the same phenomena. If Herod was a Sadducee, Herod's Sadduceeism, like the frost upon the window-panes, was such a thin layer shutting out the invisible world that the least warmth of conscience melted it, and the clear daylight glared in upon him. And I am afraid that there are a great many of us who may be half inclined to regret supernatural religion and the thought of another life who would find precisely the same thing happening to them.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 17. *Persecution of the good.*—

1. Think it no new or strange thing if in our times we see good and faithful ministers unjustly troubled and persecuted by those in authority, and that even for the faithful discharge of their ministry. Pray for them, and use all good means to help them. 2. Let all faithful ministers prepare and arm themselves for troubles and persecutions

in the world (Matt. x. 24). 3. It should comfort and encourage faithful ministers to bear such troubles patiently, and not be dismayed at them, seeing they suffer no other but what the most excellent prophets and ministers of God have gone through before them. 4. See the wretched blindness and corruption of our nature, causing us to hate and persecute such as are called and sent of God to do us good—yea, the greatest good.—*G. Petter.*

*The propensity of the heart to self-delusion.*—It is not improbable that Herod, conscious as he was that he most unjustly detained John the Baptist in prison, applauded himself with complacency, and assumed in his own estimation great credit for virtue, because he had withstood the solicitations of Herodias for his death. Have you not also, while aware that you have lived under the habitual influence of some unchristian temper, in the habitual indulgence of some unchristian practice, proudly congratulated yourself on your goodness, because you have abstained from other crimes to which you were tempted? Have you not satisfied yourself for yielding to the one temptation by reminding your conscience that you did not yield to the other? Have not you hankered after a compromise with Divine justice, and meditated with complacent self-righteousness the production of a balance of imaginary merit to countervail the penalty of guilt? See Hag. i. 5; Isa. xlv. 20; Rev. iii. 17; Gal. iii. 10. If example can affect you, look to that of Herod. Behold in him an illustration of the consequences entailed on perseverance in a single sin. In him behold a picture of that abandoned depravity of which perseverance in a single sin is naturally the forerunner. Is there an Herodias whom you will not put away? Let suitable temptations arise, and guilt equal to that of Herod may become yours.—*T. Gisborne, D.D.*

Ver. 18. *The duty of reproving sin.*—

1. Ministers ought not to wink at sin in those of their charge, not to be



silent at the committing of it; but to admonish and reprove the same as occasion offers, in public and private (2 Tim. iv. 2; Tit. ii. 15). 2. Ministers must deal impartially in admonishing and reproofing sin, not only in mean persons, but in the great ones. 3. Such as have a call to reprove sin in others should do it plainly and directly, shewing them their sin, and the danger of it by the Word of God, in such sort as they may be in conscience convinced of it.—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 19. *Hatred against reprovers.*—It is very shocking, but is there nothing in our own hearts that can interpret to us this woman's hate? Has the reproof of some cherished sin never stirred within us a feeling of bitter enmity towards the reprover? Doubtless we should shrink back in horror from the mere thought of murder; but, remember, the spirit of hatred, of revenge, whether it lead to murder or stop short at some lesser vengeance, is essentially the same (Matt. v. 21, 22).—*W. T. Wilson.*

Ver. 20. *Vice respects virtue.*—Feared John there in prison?—feared the helpless captive, bound and confined far from the sight of a friend? A trait how deeply true to the human soul! Yes, vice must respect virtue all the time: ever putting it to shame, countering and insulting it, banishing it, loading it with chains, it must fearfully respect it. Is it not so? Whenever you have been the aggressor in any difference or quarrel with a fellow-man, though you may have added defence to defence, and piled vindication on vindication, have you been able, after all, to uproot a deep-seated regard even for him you differed with? When the passion and turbid commotion of the hour have passed by, has not that solemn regard subsided to the very bottom of your mind, and, in the light of transparent reflexion, made you ashamed of yourself, if not caused you to stand aghast at the wrong you see scored against you, as with the point

of a diamond, on the page of your own heart?—*C. A. Bartol.*

*Religion too costly for Herod.*—Think of all the weary steps which Herod must retrace before he could be even on a moral level to start on St. John's principles of religion. Perhaps in intense moments, when martyrdom was the consequence, it would have been in some ways easier to make a profession—to stand forth from the parody of baptism on the stage, and to own oneself converted and be torn to death—to jump down into the amphitheatre where men were fighting, and say, "You shall not do it," and be cut to pieces—to be carried away by the impulse of a great movement, and die in the heat of enthusiasm. But in the quiet of a great lull, among people who are not intensely committed one way or another, to alter the mode of life, to cut away with their own hands the hindrances and barriers, to be known to have plucked out a right eye or to have cut off a right foot, to be earnestly preaching renunciation instead of a faint disapproval of things which we do not think are quite right, to be practising faith instead of an eclectic appreciation, an earnest practice of true religion instead of being "an honorary member of all forms of belief"—it costs a good deal, it means a good deal. Herod shrinks from it; giving up that bad connexion was not so much in itself, but it meant a good deal, and there was more than one person to be considered.—*Canon Newbolt.*

*"Did many things."*—What those "many things" were which Herod amended at the bidding of John we vainly surmise. A few of the grosser corruptions of his foul court were perchance removed, or it may be John could hold back the stubborn king in some one occasional act of cruelty, or persuade him to pay some attention to the outward worship of God; but he could not, did not, win him to a thorough reformation of his own life. It was all surface work. The deep, ingrained depravity was not shaken

off. There was pleasure in hearing truth—a partial obedience to truth—but not a thorough casting away of impurity and cruelty and fraud. And we know the result. The evil spirit, driven out in a measure, returned again. One day of excess, one hour of ungoverned passion, swept away the edifice of sand, and a crime which stamps him for ever in the ranks of the Pilates and Judases, the unjust judges and false friends, plunged his soul again into unutterable darkness. The only voice which had ever stirred the better spirit within him was quenched in blood, and the last state became worse than the first.—*Bishop Woodford.*

*Herod and John.*—Here are two men, each swayed by his past, each working out a future; living in the same age, within touch, as it were, of the same wonderful crisis of history—with the same God, the same nature, the same heaven to win, the same hell to avoid. And now under the same roof, and yet how separated in every possible way! With a value to the world which varied with terrible irony in inverse ratio to their outward circumstances! The one pledged up to the hilt to the service of God, the maintenance of principle, and the integrity of his life; the other a mere plaything of the world, tossed up and down like a cork upon its turbulent waters, the victim of every whim, the slave of every pleasure, hounded along by his lusts, his very principle of morality given in pawn to an adulteress; and yet with a lingering appreciation still left of a noble character when he saw one; the power of still snatching at an ornament which he had sense enough left to know was precious, as it was swept by on the waves. It was politic to shut up the open-mouthed prophet. Yes; but that was not all—he had liked to keep him by him. His stern words roused a delightful thrill of self-distrust; gave him, if we follow one reading of the passage, deep perplexity; perhaps even led him to do certain things, to take certain steps in the

direction of right; and, at all events, it was a real pleasure to him to hear him speak on great and deep subjects. It might be just a link with a better past to have a prophet on the premises, albeit in the dungeon.—*Canon Newbolt.*

*The downward path.*—In our own days, amidst our own homes, there are souls taking the downward path, because they, like Herod, will not give up their besetting sin. Perhaps it is the seductive wine-cup, perhaps the perilous friendship of some sceptic. Perhaps it is the strange delusion which makes the happiness of some men—adding bid to bit of shining metal, of which they make no use; or that sin in disguise, the idolatry of self, making everything and everybody bow down to one's own ease and comfort! One is reminded of the account given of the way in which old Westminster Bridge came to ruin. The stone-work piers on which the arches rested were built on piles of wood firmly driven into the river's bed; but the scour of the ebbing tides, and the force of the currents, swept away the earth and gravel from around the piles, till they were no longer secure. So with the soul. We make firm resolutions, as we think, and for a time they last; but the powerful stream of temptation gradually loosens them, and the whole superstructure of the Christian life is ready to fall in pieces. Many a gallant ship has been wrecked by a simple leak; so one sin worked the ruin of Herod Antipas.—*Dr. Hardman.*

Ver. 21. *A convenient day.*—A crime is more than half committed when it is once resolved on; a convenient day cannot be long wanting to a passion so violent and vigilant as revenge animated by an infamous love. The feasts of the world are days very convenient for sin, as the feasts of the Church are for piety. It is a great misfortune to be engaged to be at the former; a great imprudence not to provide against the infectious air which is there breathed; a great piece of unfaithfulness not to excuse ourselves

from going when we can ; and a very great folly to appear there without any manner of obligation.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 22. *Lessons.*—1. How dangerous it is to make rash and unadvised promises ! 2. How much wicked men are addicted to their sinful lusts, and what great account they make of them in that they are content, for the satisfying of them, to be at great cost and charge ! 3. The cursed fruit and effect of sin and sinful lusts in such as are given over to them ; that they even besot them and make them foolish, depriving them of sound reason and judgment (Hos. iv. 11 ; Rom. i. 21, 28 ; Prov. vii. 22, xxiii. 35).—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 25. *Resist solicitation to sin.*—Allow not yourself to be entrapped into sin by the solicitations and importunities of others, not even of your friends and your nearest relations, should you be unhappy enough to perceive tempters among them. You will not be urged, it may be presumed, to procure the imprisonment or the murder of another. But were tempters ever at a loss for grounds of temptation ? If you are in poverty, may they not impel you to meliorate your condition by depredations on the property of a neighbour, or to excite charity by exaggerated representations of your distress ? Are you moving in a higher sphere ? May they not ensnare you into captivity to ambition, or seduce you into the habit of squandering in dissipation that sacred talent, time, entrusted to your charge ? And whether you occupy a lower or a higher station, may they not encourage you to over-reach an ignorant or a careless man in a contract ; to revenge yourself on some person who has offended you, or whom you envy, by spreading a slanderous tale to his disadvantage ; to withhold reparation from those whom you have wronged ; to surrender your heart to things temporal ; to live not unto God and Christ, but unto the world and yourself ? Stand prepared upon the watch-tower. Obey

the Lord Omnipotent, not man. Resist the assaults of the devil, whatever be the instruments which he employs. Away with fear, with irresolution, with false shame. Be strong in the grace of Christ.—*T. Gisborne, D.D.*

*Callousness in youth.*—This is a picture of human sin more loathsome, it seems to me, than the other. For this damsel could have had no revengeful hate, no vindictive passion, rankling in her heart. The prophet had not rebuked her. Hers was a cool, deliberate, passionless cruelty—cruelty at which one shudders when associated with her age and sex ; for if not with youth and girlhood, where should pity and compassion dwell ? Doubtless Salome had a motive. Perhaps she feared the loss of her position and her pleasures, and fear can be quite as powerful an incentive to crime as revenge or hate. The prophet had unwittingly laid his hand upon this young girl's world, and she turned again and stung him. Ah ! believe me ; youth, apparently so bright and fresh and winning, if you venture to touch its pleasures, can show a callousness, a steely hardness of the heart, which you would have deemed incredible.—*W. T. Wilson.*

*Lessons.*—1. How apt children are by nature to follow wicked counsel and advice given them by their parents ! 2. The wicked make but a light matter of sin—yea, of great and grievous sins, such as murder.—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 26. *Herod's dilemma.*—The dilemma of Herod was the dilemma of a man whose conduct was governed not by the principles of an immutable morality, the eternal distinctions of right and wrong, but by a vague superstition and a miserable conventionalism. The petty rules and obligations which he recognised were below the requirements and emergencies of life, and therefore only served to betray him into sin. 1. Is it not strange to hear this man, face to face with crime, pleading the sanctity of an oath to justify his commission of it ?



What a moral bewilderment was that ! Had Herod been a man of pure life and clear conscience, how long would such a monstrous sophism have entangled him ? The guilt of such oaths consists in making and keeping them, not in breaking them. If they are registered at all, it is not in heaven, but in hell. 2. Reference to the opinion of the world, and deference to it, and conference with it, and preference of it above every principle and rule and law, human or Divine—is not this a tendency that grows upon us very, very fast ? 3. Is idle sorrow ever availing ? It did not save John. Will it save Herod at the day of judgment ?—*W. T. Wilson.*

*Conscience darkened by sin.*—The pleasures which chiefly affect or rather bewitch the body, and by so doing become the pest and poison of the nobler and intellectual part of man, are those false and fallacious pleasures of lust and intemperance. . . . Nothing does or can darken the mind or conscience of man more. . . . Could Herod have ever thought himself obliged by the religion of an oath to murder the Baptist, had not his lust and his Herodias imprisoned and murdered his conscience first ? . . . It seems his besotted conscience, having broken through the seventh commandment, the sixth stood too near it to be safe long.—*R. South, D.D.*

*Herod's duty plain.*—The case cannot be supposed wherein a man should be so straitened as he could not come off fairly without sinning. Say a man through heat of blood made a wicked vow to kill his brother : here he hath, by his own rashness, brought himself into a seeming strait, that either he must commit a murder or break a vow—either of which seemeth to be a great sin, the one against the sixth, the other against the third commandment. But here is in very deed no strait nor perplexity at all. Here is a fair, open course to him without sin. He may break his vow, and there is an end. Neither is this the choice of the lesser sin ; but only the

loosening of the lesser bond—the bond of charity being greater than the bond of a promise, and there being good reason that (in terms of inconsistency, when both cannot stand) the lesser bond should yield to the greater. But is it not a sin for a man to break a vow ? Yes, where it may be kept *salvis charitate et justitiâ* ; then the breach is a sin ; but in the case proposed it is no sin (Exod. i. 16, etc. ; Judg. xi. 30, 31 ; Acts xxiii. 12).—*Bishop Sanderson.*

Ver. 27. *Guilty compliance.*—Thus it has often been : what is noblest and best sacrificed, not to policy or necessity, or in the hot, fierce conflict of opposing issues, but in a mood of dalliance, and in compliance with what appeals to the baser part of our nature. There is cruelty in the brutal fury of a mob ; there is cruelty in the vindictive apprehension of an imperilled order ; but there is no cruelty equal to the cruelty of thorough worldliness—the light, careless gaiety which sends a prophet to the block because the wine flows, and the jest goes round, and the thrilling mazes of a voluptuous dance have fired the heart of King Herod.—*W. T. Wilson.*

Ver. 29. *Lessons.*—1. Such as have reaped spiritual good and profit by others do owe special thankfulness to them ; and this thankfulness they ought to shew toward them by the fruits of it, in doing duties of love to them ; and that not only in their lifetime, but even after they are dead. 2. It is a duty of love and mercy which we owe to our Christian friends departed this life, to be careful to bury them in good and decent manner, and with such honour and respect as is fitting to their persons. 3. God takes special care of the good name and credit of His faithful servants, even after they are dead and gone (Ps. cxii. 6 ; Prov. x. 7).—*G. Petter.*

*John's mission fulfilled.*—So ended to human eyes the life and ministry of St. John the Baptist. But if we

regard this as the real end of all, we manifestly make an infinite mistake: St. John had made preparation for the coming of Christ, and now Christ was come, and so St. John was called to his rest, and his works followed him. And we may draw from his history this conclusion, applicable to our own times—namely, that when missionaries

of Christ's gospel lose their lives in the work, have their heads cut off, it may be, by savages, and when their bodies are buried in the tomb, the end is not yet; they have prepared the way for the coming of Christ, and their work will not be useless in the eye of Him whom appearances can never deceive.—*Bishop H. Goodwin.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 30—32.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xiv. 13; LUKE ix. 10.)

*Rest after work.*—The disciples had just returned from the missionary journey through Galilee and Judea. Their Master had sent them out, by two and two together, six parties of them in all, to preach repentance and remission of sins. 1. You can fancy how they must have gone forth, all of them novices, and some of them young men. Imagine it, you who have not yet survived the memory of your own younger days: the new-born sense of our own importance, which accompanies our first attempt at responsible action; the childlike hopefulness to which no miracle of success seems impossible; all the bright illusions, all the golden dreams of youth—that time of life when every subject possesses so fresh an interest, when every effort seems so certain to succeed, when the sensation of failure is yet a thing unknown. And such a doctrine as they had to preach, and such a Master as they had to proclaim as the coming King! What could there be before them but rapid and complete victory? 2. They came back, we may imagine, with an immense deal to tell. No child that returns to its mother from a visit more overflowing with talk than they. “They told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.” Here they had met an open and truthful mind; and what a pleasure it had been to instruct and encourage him! Here they had found a repentant yet desponding sinner; and how they had delighted to bind up his broken heart and to send him on his way rejoicing! And here they had encountered a captious gainsayer; and with what a clever repartee they had answered and silenced his objections! And what a ready hearing and how much success their words and efforts had obtained! They can hardly have failed to have told their Master another thing, which the seventy, who were sent out afterwards, reported, when they too returned—what mighty works they had done in His name. Nor would they fail to receive some such reply, half encouragement and half caution, as that which the seventy received (Luke x. 18, 20). You can imagine much being said like this by that Master, still young Himself, and therefore naturally, as well as supernaturally, sympathising with the hopefulness of youth, cautious not to depress zeal, even while correcting its extravagance. “Yes,” He said, “the Spirit of good is stronger than the spirit of evil. Yes, Satan is falling from his high place of power, and he will fall. But do not boast of spiritual power; do not be exalted by spiritual success; rejoice, rather, that there is a place for all faithful labourers, the unsuccessful as well as the successful, in the dwelling of their Lord. When bright hopes are all faded, when success has turned to failure, when high gifts have deserted their former possessors, there will still remain for you a refuge and a home.” At the same time there came those words of kindly invitation, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.” They were, in fact, to go with their Master and enjoy a well-

earned holiday. 3. And so they embarked on the calm bosom of the Sea of Galilee, and raised their sail; and the light airs began to draw them off the land, slowly and dreamily, towards the lonelier country of the eastern side. There, let us think, are the thirteen upon the lake—the crew of twelve, each one of whom is an apostle, and the Captain, whom almost all now admit to have been the Ideal Man, whom we believe to have been God manifest in the flesh. Fresh airs are breathing on the weary brows; bright waters are rippling under the vessel's floor; an open sky is bending over them, boundless as that love of God which they have been proclaiming; no shadow of approaching horrors has yet fallen on them, and all hearts are free and joyous, for not even Judas is a traitor yet. 4. It was from diligent labours for the good of souls that those disciples were invited to seek a temporary refuge. How much more needful must it be to seek such occasional retirements from the present hurrying world! God made the world—the world of society as well as the world of nature. Even this rapid world of the end of the nineteenth century has come into existence through His providence. The Great Steersman has not abandoned the helm, but is guiding it, through all the cross-currents and changing winds, to noble objects of His own. The evil in it is not original, and (happier still) it is not inseparable. It is of His ordering that we live our lives, in close and frequent communion with those fellow-creatures of ours who form our world for their good and for our own. *In* the world, though not *of* the world, our Lord bade His disciples be. Nevertheless in the world certain evils happen to us for which occasional retirement is the cure. Let us look at one or two of these, for which we seek a remedy.

I. **The world confuses our self-knowledge.**—The source of self-knowledge is reflexion; and little reflexion is possible amid the bustle of the world. It happens to us, as to the disciples in the gospel—there are many coming and going—employers, customers, clients, patients, parishioners, as the case may be. The trade, or business, or profession occupies nearly all our time. Family affairs often cause anxiety. Public business, politics, religion, charity, all solicit attention, which must be given from time to time. A hundred persons have to be spoken to, a hundred subjects considered. As soon as one business is despatched another comes to be transacted. Well for us if we can keep them distinct and separate, and not mix and muddle them all. All these are outside of our real selves, so that the mind engaged in them acquires an outward leaning, and seldom collects itself inwardly at all. So reflexion perishes, and with it self-knowledge. The cure of this is retirement.

II. **During our intercourse with the world our wishes and objects grow more and more worldly**—that is, they become confined and bounded by this present world. We cease to feel our own immortality, we cease to have intercourse with God, and then all our aims insensibly decline. Conscience and duty become less and less our rule. We are more and more guided by self-interest or personal inclination; and by even worse things, covetousness, ambition, revenge, our motives sinking gradually, so that we cannot tell when or how they change. It is in retirement that we must resist and repair declines like these.

III. **The last evil I will name, whose proper remedy is retirement, is irritation.** Many things occur to ruffle and disturb. We become vexed and displeased, perhaps with actual enemies, perhaps with indifferent people, perhaps with our best friends. This is sure to be so. For all are sinful; and our respective faults and failings jar against each. Besides, all are short-sighted and imperfectly informed, and therefore we often mistake and misunderstand. For all these inward disturbances the remedy is retirement and reflexion. Enter into your closet and shut to the door, and pray to your Father which is in secret. Lay yourselves in the arms of Jesus; throw yourselves open to the eye of the All-seeing



God. There breathe forth the wish, "That which I see not teach Thou me; if I have done iniquity, I would do so no more." Your Father will teach you; He will guide your feet into the way of peace.—*Archdeacon Rawstorne.*

*Lenten retirement.*—We are most of us living, as many almost necessarily must live, in all the busy, anxious cares of a busy, anxious age, our duties or our business laying claim to every moment of our time, till the throng and crush of earthly things prevent us from coming near to touch the Saviour's robe. Then it is that our solemn Lenten fast bids us come into our chambers and shut our doors, offers to the jaded, wearied soul a little rest, a short breathing-space in which we may gather strength to wrestle on, a moment's retirement from that unceasing "coming and going" which makes up the greatness and the littleness of our life in the world.

**I. Lent is a time of retirement**—a special opportunity for being alone with God. As a nation we are becoming increasingly alive to the economic dangers, physical and moral, of a life without leisure. The deadening of spiritual energy, the choking of spiritual life and aspirations—these are the parallel dangers to the religious life which knows not the blessing of retirement. You will see, then, that by the rest of religious retirement we mean something different from that rest which belongs at all times to those who are living with God. For that is an abiding thing; this is occasional. Religious retirement means a withdrawing ourselves for a special purpose and at a special time, just as he whose life is the life of one who is praying always has yet his special time of prayer, or as He whose life was lived in the full consciousness of God yet loved to withdraw Himself to the lonely mountain-top and spend whole nights in prayer to God.

**II. The time that is to be dedicated to Lenten retirement must be "redeemed" time—time won, not from duties, but from pleasures.** Just as fasting may not trench on that which is necessary to health, but may simply limit us in what we might do without, so in redeeming some special time for prayer and self-examination we must make up our mind to give up some luxuries. Those few minutes we give, perhaps, to our social chat; the comfortable half-hour that we spend over our daily paper; the time we spend in unnecessary letter-writing, or the odd times we pass we hardly know how in mere do-nothingness—all these might be spared, or limited, and dedicated to God.

**III. How will this help us in running our daily race?**—1. It will teach us self-knowledge. As we stand alone in the presence of God, every act stripped of the colouring which human praise and blame can give, without any of those secondary helps which the love of approbation and the desire to please so often lend us in the world, putting on one side those false standards by which we judge, the waxen wings which have borne us aloft hitherto melted in the rays of the sun—then we begin to know ourselves. And as we review our past spiritual life we see the shadows of selfish and interested motives darkening what once seemed clear and fair; our fancied love of God in that new light was but an æsthetic or poetical devotion to an ideal, our humility a skilfully concealed but now discovered pride; the very bright ones which seemed to guard our way are but as evil spirits in the form of an angel of light. 2. It is the great means of knowing God. For knowledge is born of intercourse and communion with its object. He who made man his study sought to learn his subject in the crowded market-place. And if we are to know God it must be by losing no opportunity of being *with Him*: with Him in those places where He has set His Name, in His Church, and His Sacrament, and His Word; above all, in prayer.

**IV. This knowledge of God and of ourselves which comes from retirement with God brings with it a new power for doing our duties in the world.** The

presence by which you seemed in your retirement to be flooded is the presence which shall go with you into the world. It is the ark of God which shall carry victory over the enemies, the real presence which transforms your very bodies into the temples of the Living God, the light which will brighten and make clear your earthly path, the continual source of strength and nourishment, preparing you a table in the very midst of your enemies, a fountain of living water springing up within you to quench the battle-thirst. In retirement and private prayer you have learnt what it is to be alone with God, and now in the roar and din of conflict you realise what it is to have God with you.—*A. L. Moore.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 30. *Duties of ministers.*—1. Ministers ought so to carry themselves in discharge of their calling, that they may approve their diligence and faithfulness unto Christ, who hath called them to that office. 2. Ministers ought so faithfully and conscientiously to do the duties of their calling, that they may be able to give a good and comfortable account thereof unto Christ, who hath enjoined them those duties.—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 31. *The use of leisure.*—1. "Come." This is the first principle in every time of leisure, such as it is fit for a Christian to take, that we should spend it in the presence and under the eye of the Master. 2. "Apart into a desert place." Leisure for the overworked had better be sought among the works of God in nature than among the works of man. 3. "A while." Such seasons of rest are only temporary, and are meant to nerve and brace us for work—our work, God's work, Christ's work. If it does not fit us for this, if it leaves us only discontented, selfish, and indolent, we have made a curse to ourselves out of a blessing.—*John Ellerton.*

*Seclusion with Christ.*—How much better would our work be done, how much more thoroughly our duty, how much healthier and more satisfactory would our worldly business be, if we could realise that that which is earthly can only bear beautiful blossom or rich fruit, when watered by the rains that fall from heaven; that the life must grow hard and barren which is cut off from its spiritual root; that Christ is

ever calling us, amidst all our cares and engrossments to keep ourselves from being carried away on the flood of these, by preserving our personal fellowship with Him, and to come apart from the bustle of the world, into the silence and seclusion, where we may meet Him, and in the consciousness of His presence "rest a while."—*R. H. Story, D.D.*

"Rest" for "a while" only.—This lesson is gladly learned, and too much practised. *Requiescite* pleaseth every man. The truth is, that the body and mind of man must after labour be refreshed with rest. But he which laboureth not is altogether as unworthy to rest as to eat. Again, such as will take rest and ease after labours must learn of Christ as well to measure their ease as their pains. He permitteth His disciples to take their rest; but He limiteth and restraineth His permission, saying, "Rest a while." For by too much rest men are not made the more fit but the less willing to take pain.—*Archbishop Sandys.*

*Leisure for communion with God.*—I know how hard it seems to many to get room in their lives for a quiet hour. They are so compassed about with imperious demands and fretting details. "Would we could have it," they say, "but it is impossible." Well, it is often a great mercy when God takes such an one and lays him aside by sickness, where he *must* wait and be still, and is no longer oppressed with the feeling that he ought to be *doing* something. In that strange watch-tower of trouble his life rolls itself out

before him, and he sees how brief it is, with the mystery behind it and the mystery before it, and God alone above all from everlasting to everlasting. Why should we compel the great Father thus to visit us with affliction

ere we will find leisure to talk with Him and mourn for our shortcomings? —*D. W. Forrest.*

*Solitude*, says one, is the mother-country of the strong; *silence* is their prayer.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 33—44.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xiv. 13-21; LUKE ix. 10-17; JOHN vi. 1-13.)

*The multitude fed.*—When Jesus came forth from a brief rest, He was confronted in the desert place by the familiar sight of sinful, weary, sick humanity. That they should come there was almost a miracle of His attractive power. At once, we are told, the streams of His mercy began to flow.

**I. The compassion of Jesus.**—A great multitude is always a moving spectacle. The pathos of life comes out before our imaginations, as we behold in it so many broken, disordered, disappointing, wrecked lives; so much that begins with gladness and ends in grief; so much sin, and the countless victories of death. Even the withered heart of Xerxes was touched, when he sat on a throne at Salamis and looked down on his army of a million slaves, all of whom, he said, would soon pass away. Then we must remember that the company gathered around Jesus was at that time peculiarly a *sad* one. They were there because they were in *need* and they *felt* the need. Weary with a long journey, pressing their claims on His attention, stretching out “lame hands” of questioning and doubt, lifting imploring eyes to meet His—what could quicker touch the fountain of His compassion? He was deeply moved. His face changed with mingled sorrow and love. Now, who were they? He had compassion on them because they were as sheep that had been over-driven and were fainting on the road. And He stood before them as the Good Shepherd, who was soon to lay down His life for the sheep. This brings us to dwell upon the attitude of the Holy One towards sin and towards sinners separately and in masses. That whole company, men, women, and children, were *sinners*. Because they were such, He had come into the world to save them; and we might presume that the supreme fact about them in His mind was their sinfulness and guilt. But this compassion at the sight of the crowd speaks to us of that other relation in which He could look at them, even as objects of pity, while they were objects of condemnation. They were offenders against the holy law, but at the same time they were lost sheep to be called home. But this pity, we observe next, took shape in forms of *real helpfulness*. It was not wasted in the heart, like the emotions that come and go as we read a novel or see a play at the theatre, and think our feelings are tender because they are moved by imaginary griefs. The compassion of our Lord took on a twofold form: one, that of setting in motion far-reaching works in the preaching of the gospel among the nations and the seed-sowing of distant harvests; the other, a *nearer, simpler* attention to immediate wants.

**II. The power of Jesus.**—“He bowed the heavens and came down” to the measure of commonest human need. The fact about this power that touches us most is that it is power to bless the world, and to bring salvation to the lost. Each miracle of our Lord’s was a sign of something farther, something more lasting and blessed. How soon all that desert multitude passed away from earth! How quickly the bread created by miracle perished! And yet it stood for that which is imperishable, and on which, if we feed as we all may, we shall never hunger again. Christ Himself is the Bread of God that cometh down



from heaven and giveth life to the world. We may feed on it each moment and never exhaust the supply. He is not a luxury, but bread to be eaten freely and without satiety. The whole lesson is that of the Divine helpfulness for all our needs, and of the Divine fulness of supply.

**III. The command of Jesus to His disciples in all ages.**—Each step in the supply of the crowd with food is interesting to all who preach or teach the everlasting Word, because it reveals the natural unbelief and distrust with which we have to contend when many are to be fed by us and we are sure that our stock is not sufficient. Many a time, if you preach, when you look upon a company of men seated in God's house to hear your voice, you will feel like Philip, and wonder whence provision is coming for so many. But if you bring your scanty loaves and fishes—if you bid the men sit down to receive, not your fancies nor wisdom, your eloquence nor knowledge, but heaven's bread, and that only—you will find the old miracle repeated. You will take what Christ hands over to you and pass it on to others. You will be fed by what feeds them. You will say with them, when the feast is over, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." For, after all, this and this only is our work—to give what is given unto us. We are not to despise hard labour in winning our supplies. They will not come to the lazy nor to the ignorant. We are called to seek a chastened spirit that discerns the true intent of the heavenly messages. We are to meditate on the Word and grow into its spirit and life. We surely must obey it, and so prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. But for the real conveyance of food from God to a soul we must rely on God Himself.—*Edward N. Packard.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

**Ver. 33. Christ's followers drawn by various motives.**—1. Some were drawn with the strangeness of those things which He wrought and taught amongst them. To whom in these our days we may compare them which haunt sermons for no other end but either vainly to hearken for news, or curiously to note what order and eloquence they may find in the preacher, or maliciously to take hold of things spoken, when they may by froward construction be drawn to an offensive meaning. These labour to their own loss: they are unprofitable followers. 2. Others followed Christ for bread. Such followers our times have brought out too many. So long as the gospel can feed, cherish, and maintain them, they are willing and glad to be professors of it; but when persecution cometh they shrink. 3. Sundry there were which followed for a desire which they had of bodily health. For Christ "went about healing every malady and every infirmity in the people." We see by daily ex-

perience that the body is more cared for than the soul, the flesh than the spirit, the carcase than the mind. 4. The last and best sort of followers were such as followed Christ to hear His Word. This is that travail that chiefly is required of a Christian: "Seek first the kingdom of God." This declareth us to be His children, to be His flock. "He that is of God heareth God's Word."—*Archbishop Sandys.*

**The importunity of the crowd.**—The fact thus revealed is worthy of observation, as a commentary upon the weary life of our Lord. He wished His disciples to retire to the desert to take some rest, but the people would let them have none. If the reasons which prompted them to follow Christ were really the love of His doctrine, then we may gain a lesson from their importunity, and we may be sure that, however much it might increase His labours, Christ would be pleased by such importunity. What displeases Christ is the quiet, easy indifference of

those who care not for His presence, and will not put themselves out of the way to hear His words.—*Bishop H. Goodwin.*

Ver. 34. *The Church and social questions.*—The virtue of compassion is the great discovery of Christ. The world's pain and weakness were to the heathen a definite loss to society. It was only so much human waste. Christ believed in the usefulness of things, and utilised the rejected refuse of society. It was in this refuse that Jesus reared the tender plant of compassion. Fed upon sorrow and sickness, and watered with tears, compassion has redeemed the waste places, and made them blossom as the rose. Yet Christian compassion has been slow to overtake the whole field that claimed its energy and its labour. Compassion towards individuals was early developed as one of the first and finest of the Christian graces. Compassion towards the multitudes was, till lately, left uncultivated. This, no doubt, is partly to be accounted for by the fact that in Greece and in the Roman Empire the claims and interests of the State were paramount. The individual was sacrificed to society—so much so, that in Sparta sickness was regarded more as a crime than a misfortune. Weak children were quietly put out of the way, lest they should become a burden. In Rome the individual gave himself up in the arena of the Colosseum that the emperor and the people might enjoy the luxury of a fierce laugh or cry. As a rebound from this contempt for the sacredness of the individual, Christianity long confined itself to the salvation of the units of society. The masses, the multitudes, have to a great extent been neglected. But everywhere around us there are signs that the social conscience is being deeply moved. The trend of present-day activity is distinctly in the direction of redressing the wrongs and securing the rights of society. Now the question requires to be raised, What is to be the attitude of the Church

towards the great problems relating to the social weal with which we are brought face to face? The answer is sometimes returned that the Church should confine itself to the duty of saving the *souls* of men; that she should only deal with men *as individuals*, and not with human society. Now this reply, which limits the sphere of Christian activity, requires to be looked at in order to see the poor conception of humanity and the paltry faith in Christ's power which are at the root of it. 1. When we are told to confine ourselves to the care and salvation of the *souls* of men, we wonder how this can fit in with Christ's idea of man. A great deal of His time was occupied in ministering to men's bodies. To tell me that I am to save the soul of a man who is starving, or living in a filthy hovel, or almost worked to death, raises in my mind the query, "How is it to be done?" The physical and mental conditions under which a man exists have such an influence upon his spiritual condition that we must treat them all concurrently. Hence the justification for social work alongside of our evangelistic agencies. 2. Again, we are warned that the Church should confine itself to operating upon the *individual*, and leave social questions alone. What would you think of a man who advised a gardener to confine his attention to cultivating his plants, but not to heed the soil in which the plants had to grow? Society is to the individual what soil is to the plant. In order to save a man we must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to him as an individual, but we must see that his Christian life is not next to impossible in the social surroundings in which he is compelled to live. The salvation of the individual and the salvation of society must go hand in hand. Now, if this be the case, the relation of the gospel to human life becomes more extensive and more complex than is generally supposed. Everything that affects the well-being of man is a proper subject of Christian inquiry. 3. But it is

sometimes objected that the Church should have nothing to do with subjects that are under dispute, and upon which men, from interest or conviction, are divided. It is sufficient to reply that if the Church of Christ is only to deal with those things upon which men are agreed, her mission is useless, and her influence effete. The religious, social, and political life of the people is complex. The one shades into the other. Many of our social reforms cannot be secured without the aid of laws enacted by Parliament. Is the Church to be dumb because temperance, religious equality, sanitation, etc., have a political bearing? These social reforms affect the religious welfare of the country; and to stand still would be to betray the spiritual rights of the people. 4. Yet, when all this is said, we cannot but revert to the great truth that the chief aim of the gospel is to secure an inner change of heart. External changes are only enjoyed and secured after the great internal change, which is the crowning work of Christ's mission.—*Wm. Dickie.*

*A shepherd needed in all human societies.*—Men must be organised, taught, disciplined. There are men Divinely qualified to interpret truth; they have insight, sympathy, and faculty of delicate and forcible expression. There are other men who can only receive what is given to them by God's ministry. They are as sheep; they need a shepherd.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Vers. 39, 40. *Order in God's work.*—If we regard the feeding of the multitude as a parable concerning the work which the apostles were to do in the world afterwards, a parable of the spiritual feeding of mankind with the bread from heaven which Christ should supply them withal, then these orderly arrangements made by the command of our Lord are very full of instruction: the tendency of men, when they once realise the fact that they are surrounded by a hungry multitude, is to throw a piece of bread here and a piece there, to make

irregular efforts to supply the wants which they perceive to exist; but this is not Christ's way, and therefore it is not the wise way; order must in this, as in every other work of God, be the root of all success.—*Bishop H. Goodwin.*

Vers. 41-43. *This miracle illustrates*—1. The dealings of God in providence.

(1) Think of the number to be fed, and then look upon the corn-seed, cast into the ground, to supply bread for any one year, and you might well ask, "What are they among so many?"

But God manipulates the seed in the soil, and then sends it forth as from His own hand, bread enough and to spare. The annual miracle is as great a wonder as the miracle wrought in an hour.

(2) God seldom works miracles when ordinary means will suffice; but when you have tried all, and men have given you up as a hopeless case, it is still right to go to God, the Great Physician. God sometimes sends food to the poor and needy in most unusual ways. It seems to them almost a miracle, but it would be a great mistake, if any were to infer from that, that if they only have faith they may neglect to plough, and to sow, and to work for their daily bread. 2. The way in which the world is to be fed with the Bread of Life. (1) In the heart and soul of each man who receives this Bread it grows, so that there is not only enough for yourself, but also enough to distribute among your neighbours, and the more you distribute it the more it grows. (2) This bread also resembles the Bread of Life in its overflowing abundance. There is room for all in the love of God. Lessons: 1. Christ commands nothing that He does not give us the power to perform. 2. Our resources will increase, if we make a diligent use of what we have. 3. The more you distribute, the more you yourself will possess. Every soul you bring to the gospel feast will enhance your own joy. 4. Jesus does not approve of waste.—*A. Clark.*

*Christ the Restorer.*—In no miracle



of the gospel did Jesus actually create. He makes no new members of the body, but restores old useless ones. "And so, without a substratum to work upon, He creates neither bread nor wine."

To do this would not have been a whit more difficult, but it would have expressed less aptly His mission, which was not to create a new system of things, but to renew the old, to recover the lost sheep, and to heal the sick at heart.—*Dean Chadwick.*

Vers. 41, 42. *Works out of the ordinary course.*—The miracles which our Lord Jesus Christ wrought are in truth Divine works, and, from the things that are seen, awaken the human mind to contemplate and understand the invisible God. For He is such a Being as cannot be seen by human sight, and because the miracles by which He governeth the whole world and ruleth every creature are, by their frequency, little regarded, so that scarce any one thinks it worth his while to attend to and remark the wonderful and astonishing works of God, manifested in every seed and grain upon the earth. But of His mercy He reserved some things which He would do otherwise than in the usual course of nature, that they by whom His daily wonders were unobserved might have an occasion to admire, not when they saw greater, but more unusual works. For it is a greater miracle to govern and provide for the whole world than to feed five thousand men with but five loaves; yet while men pay little regard to the former, they are astonished at the latter, not because it is greater, but more unusual; for who is it that now feeds the whole world but He from whom a few seeds sown produce the plentiful sheaves; and the same power which gives that marvellous increase multiplied the loaves in the hand of Christ, who was Himself endued with all power. Those five loaves were a kind of seed, not indeed delivered to the earth for increase, but increased by Him who made the earth. The same Divine power which wrought

the miracle with loaves and fishes instantaneously, works the greater miracles of nature gradually and with regularly appointed means.—*Augustine.*

Ver. 41. "*Blessed.*"—There can be little doubt that the words which Jesus spake were those so well known: "Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God, King of the world, who causes to come forth bread from the earth." Assuredly it was this threefold thought: the upward thought (*sursum corda*), the recognition of the creative act as regards every piece of bread we eat, and the thanksgiving, which was realised anew in all its fulness when, as He distributed to the disciples, the provision miraculously multiplied in His hands.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

Ver. 43. *The fragments* that remained were greater in amount than the original loaves. This is true in relation even to temporal things, that the man who is reasonably liberal has more than the man who keeps all to himself. He may not have more wealth than the miser, though often he has that, but he enjoys more that which he has when he has given a portion to others: that which is left becomes more to him, and affords him more enjoyment than the whole would have done if he had retained it. But this is especially true in spiritual things.—*A. Clark.*

*Gather up the fragments*—1. Of truth. Many a time, when a man has been really hungering after righteousness, he has found in some one truth which has fallen from his Master's table exactly that portion which was required to satisfy his longings. As was once said by a dying man, great in human learning: "Give me now a single promise of Scripture, that I may hold it as an ear of corn, and rub it out in the hand of faith, and it is worth to me all my other knowledge." 2. Of time. Who has not to weep for time which has not been used for its true purposes—for mercies little noted, for gifts abused, for vows forgotten, for sorrow that has not chastened and

joy that has not sanctified, for numberless visitations of God that have passed over us and left no blessing behind? (1) We have need to treasure up its very minutes, for they are fragments of a gift which God bestows. (2) In course of time we become the result of the time we live. 3. Of the means of grace. (1) Lord's Day. (2) Private

prayer. (3) Holy Eucharist. 4. Of duty. We are often apt to despise common things because they are so common, forgetting that we might lift them to a much higher dignity if we but infused into them a nobler principle, doing them as in God's sight, by God's help, and to God's glory.—*Canon Nisbet.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. —Verses 45—56.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xiv. 22-36; JOHN vi. 15-21.)

*Christ walking on the sea.* This incident stands alone, among the recorded acts of Jesus, as a peculiar manifestation of His character and dealings. In general Christ's miracles were founded on the principle of relieving human want and misery, while also displaying Divine power. But here the object was different, as will appear from a careful consideration of the circumstances.

**I. It had been a day of self-revelation on the part of Jesus.**—The privacy which He had sought for the apostles and Himself having been invaded by the multitude, He had devoted Himself to teaching them "concerning the kingdom of God, and healing them that had need of cure" (Luke ix. 11). He had also relieved, by a miraculous increase of food, the hunger of five thousand men,—thus demonstrating to the people at large that He was at least a Messenger come from God; and as such they acknowledged Him. To His more immediate disciples, however, it was necessary that He should now manifest Himself in a character of more unquestionable greatness: it was important that they should regard Him, not merely as One come from God, but as a Being closely connected with the Deity, in a union incomprehensible indeed, but undeniable. In this character, therefore, He determined to exhibit Himself to them. Accordingly "He constrained His disciples to get into the ship," etc. The unenlightened multitude whom He had instructed and miraculously fed sought forsooth to make Him a King, in acknowledgment of the benefits He had conferred upon them (John vi. 15); but He who afterwards freely offered Himself to those who came to compass His death shrank from the proffered glories of the world, and sent away those who would have forced them on Him.

**II. When evening came, Jesus was alone.** Mark how He employs the solitude thus sought and obtained. "He departed into a mountain to pray." His life on earth was a mixture of contemplation and action, of austerity and freedom: we find Him often where the greatest concourse was to be found—in market-places, synagogues, etc.; and we find Him also retiring from the crowd into a desert or a garden, and there employing Himself in all kinds of religious exercise and intercourse with His Father, in fasting, meditation, and prayer. Following His example we may doubtless lead public lives innocently and usefully, conversing with men and doing them good, mutually sowing and reaping the various comforts and advantages of human society. But since the pleasures of conversation when too freely tasted are intoxicating and dangerous, since the temptations which we thereby meet with are many and great (and even where the spirit is willing to resist, yet the flesh is often weak), we ought therefore to regulate and restrain ourselves in the indulgence of such enjoyments by periodical intermissions of them, to strengthen ourselves for such public encounters by our religious privacies, to retire from the world and

converse with God and our own conscience, examining the state and fortifying the power of our soul in secrecy and silence.

III. **Next morning Jesus joined His disciples.**—Some three hours after midnight “He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea.” The fact surprises us: yet why should it? All elements are surely alike to Him who made them! “The progress of Divinity, within His own dominions, cannot be confined to humanly constructed roads or solid ground.” What wonder, then, that He who had so amply demonstrated His power upon the land should display it upon the waters also? Our surprise is but a result and an evidence of the weakness of our faith. The disciples during Christ’s absence had been “toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary.” Doubtless that conflict of the elements had been stirred by Christ Himself, for the clearer display of His power, and the deeper conviction of His disciples. From the mountain where He prayed He had witnessed their distress; but for the benefit of their souls He delayed their rescue. So with ourselves. Often does the providence of God surround us with so dark a tempest of calamity that the prospect of relief would seem almost hopeless. Yet even in the darkest hour the eye of faith will pierce through the gloom to the regions of joy and peace beyond. Nay, are we not, through the whole of our present existence, in the situation of those wave-tossed disciples, sailing upon a sea of anxiety at the best, and of peril for the most part, in the hope of the appearance of our Lord? Is not that hope the only source of our light, the only anchor of our soul?

IV. **The appearance of Jesus first terrifies and then consoles.**—1. The confession of weakness so faithfully recorded in ver. 49 is a sample of the candour which distinguishes Holy Writ. Had Jesus approached the ship in any ordinary manner, it would have been unaccountable that His disciples should not instantly have recognised Him; but the way in which He came of itself explains their misapprehension. They had never seen Him hold in abeyance the laws of nature with respect to His own body. The idea of His walking over the sea had never entered their minds; and consequently, in the absence of any rational explanation, they readily fell a prey to the weak suggestions of superstitious credulity. And if through that mere delusion of the imagination they were thrilled with horror and cried out in an agony of fear, though free from crime, what must the guilty conscience suffer in self-inflicted tortures even here, and what must be its torment of remorse hereafter! 2. The consoling voice of Jesus calms the storm—both stilling the waves of the sea and dispelling the tumult in the hearts of the disciples (vers. 50, 51). And in similar accents does He address Himself to all who turn to Him believing (Matt. xi. 28; John iii. 16). 3. As to the degree in which we may, indeed must, repose our confidence in Him, the example of St. Peter on this occasion amply instructs us (Matt. xiv. 28-32). We are invited, nay bidden, to come to Jesus; and no sooner do we make the attempt than we are endowed with strength to enable us to come; and under the support of that celestial aid, without which we could do nothing, we advance nearer and nearer to the Eternal Source of light and life.

V. **How far was Christ’s object accomplished by this miracle?**—St. Mark tells us that they were struck with amazement at the moment, and then, “after that sudden ‘ecstasy’ was past, they continued more collectedly and thoughtfully in a wondering mood.” St. Matthew adds (xiv. 33) that they “came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God.” This was the impression which Jesus had wished to produce upon their minds, and the acknowledgment which He had sought to draw from their lips. In forming and in expressing such an opinion they were supported by the authority of Scripture (Job ix. 8).



Ver. 56. *Touching the Lord*.—Wonderful scenes must these have been,—the rumour of His coming; the preparations for it; the eagerness to be first; the gestures and cries to excite notice and pity; the gracious touch; the joyful exclamations; the thankful returning home. And we sing, “Thy touch has still its ancient power.” Let us ask some simple questions as to the meaning of that.

**I. What is the virtue now?** 1. Not bodily healing that is to say, not as it was given then. May I not then ask the Lord to heal me of my sickness, or my brother of his? I cannot do better. Let me seek the Lord through the physicians. The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up. But the healing shall neither be instant nor quite certainly given. 2. The virtue now is soul-healing. The miracles of the Lord Jesus seem to have had two ends. (1) They were demonstrative; by them Jesus of Nazareth was approved of God. (2) They were also illustrative. When prophets foretold that the lame should walk and the dumb sing, they foretold what was literally done; but their language was also a figurative description of what Jesus would do for men’s souls.

**II. What is the border of the garment?** In Rev. i. St. John records his vision of the Son of Man. It is a vision of our High Priest clothed with a garment down to the foot. He is our Aaron—our Melchizedek rather. The unction of the Spirit flows down to the skirts of His garment. Is there not a threefold hem? 1. Prayer: “Lord, be merciful to me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.” He who touches thus shall be made whole. 2. The Word of God: “Almighty God, who calledst Luke the physician to be an evangelist and physician of the soul, may it please Thee that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him all the diseases of our souls may be healed.” 3. The Holy Sacraments: We pray to the Lord, who laid His hands upon little children and blessed them, to wash and sanctify our children with the Holy Ghost. And just as it is most important for recovery and health that wholesome food in plenty be given to the sick, so He has provided that in the Eucharist we eat His Flesh and live by Him: “The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ.”

**III. What is the touch now?** 1. Not the mere use of means. It is the touch of faith and prayer which is blest. No means of grace should be used without prayer. The Lord, at His baptism, was praying (Luke iii. 21). Apostles did not confirm or ordain without prayer (Acts viii. 15, xiv. 23). Not a superstitious but a believing use of the means of grace brings healing. The difficulty of faith when Jesus was among men lay in believing that He who seemed to be man only was God. Its difficulty now is that the Lord is withdrawn by the cloud of His ascension. But faith triumphs now as it did then. 2. The touch is a personal application. “I will yet for this be inquired of to do it for them.” Heaven for the asking; but we must ask; and, God knows why, how many, alas, stop short of the asking! (1) Jesus has entered here; we were born in a Christian country. How shall we answer for it? We have owned Bibles all our lives; the house of God has stood open for us; the Lord’s Day has proclaimed to us that Jesus passeth by. What if after all we are not healed? (2) The touch of these sick needed not to be repeated; the soul’s touch does. Where first we knew health, there it is our delight to resort continually. (3) May we see the force of example here? Did the woman (Mark v. 27) set this happy fashion, and these follow her? Do not let us leave others without the help of our example, openly making application to the Lord that healeth us. (4) See the power of intercession. It was friends here who laid the sick in the Lord’s way and besought Him. Effectual fervent prayer availeth much.—*H. Thompson.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 45. *Changes in life.*—How unexpected and disheartening a change! A calm sunset; a sober livery of evening clothing the quiet vales; the rose and purple transfiguration of the mountain-tops; the peaceful rocking of the slumberous waves; the joy of feeding the five thousand with loaves and fishes multiplying in their hands; and now, behold, disappointed hearts and a stern struggle in gathering darkness against threatening winds and waves! What a picture of life it is! Improbable and unexpected changes come, bringing unrest, tempting us to be unsubmitive or even disobedient. The loom of life has been arranged to produce a pattern to our liking; the swift shuttle of time, flying through the warp of our human affairs, weaves awhile a fabric pleasing to us and others, and then, an unseen hand silently shifting all the machinery of life, strange threads and sombre colours begin to weave upon a pattern not yet disclosed.

Ver. 46. *Christ's prayer.*—The prayer here referred to was not so much a series of requests or petitions, as a state of rapt contemplation of God's presence and a profound communion with Him. He spent those quiet hours in a Divine meditation, drinking afresh at the Eternal Springs, listening to the inspirations of the Father's voice. The claims of honour and ambition which men made for Him were put aside and clean forgotten, as He entered into the secret place of the Most High and dwelt under the shadow of the Almighty. He saw then with clear vision His work stretch out before Him as the Redeemer of men, and knew that He must be made perfect through suffering ere God or man could crown Him.  
—D. W. Forrest.

*Christ lived by faith.*—As the Son of Man, made like unto His brethren, He too lived by faith. He was ever

going up into His mountain of devotion and bringing down power and encouragement. It mattered not how clamant appeared the demands for outward service, He allowed nothing to rob Him of that frequent solitary fellowship. He was never so busy that He had no time for retirement. Without it His Mission had never been accomplished. And without it our life in Him will never be strong or deep.—*Ibid.*

*Foundations out of sight.*—Sometimes, perhaps, you have been impressed by the courage with which a man stood forth for truth and justice against a gainsaying multitude, or by the patience and submission shewn by one whose earthly hopes were blasted. You marvelled; but these men had in many an hour taken counsel of themselves, they had seen visions of God, and were sure how He would have them go, and that He would go with them. They knew whom they had believed. The foundations of Divine faith and life are, like all foundations, out of sight; but the character that you see and admire is based on them, and draws its strength from them. Therefore to rest even from good works may be a duty. There are some sweet souls whose devotion is such that they never can think it right to pause in their service, who are always finding some new claim on their sympathy, until they exhaust themselves. This ceaseless energy is not good either for their sake or for the work's sake. Christ rested, simply sent the crowds away, many of them unhelped, and went up into His mountain; but when He reappeared it was with a double blessing.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 48. *Unable to come to Christ.*—We are sometimes in a like position with the disciples. In spite of all our efforts we cannot succeed in fighting our way to Him. In the midst of temptation, when our spirit seems

held down and cannot soar to the joy of faith, or in severe bodily suffering, which envelops the soul with the black veil of spiritual darkness, there is still indeed deep down in the heart a believing desire for the Lord's help, but dark thoughts of temptations rise like black and heavy waves between Him and ourselves. The soul cannot come to Christ: this sometimes lasts a long while, and even till the hour of death. Relatives may then be standing in deep grief round the death-bed, and anxiously asking: "Is it possible that this soul is to die in the darkness of doubt? Is this disciple to be forsaken by the Lord in his last hour?" Oh no; beloved, learn here that when disciples, in spite of all their efforts, cannot come to their Lord, He comes to them.—*E. Lehmann.*

*Hindrances turned into helps.*—The stormy sea has been used far too often as a symbol of a troubled life for us to hesitate a moment about making application of that scene to those times in our lives when events seem lawless, uncontrollable by ourselves, like that shifting, fluid, restless sea. Those waves seemed to present an insuperable barrier to Christ's advance, but by the power of the life that is in Him He transformed them into a means of progress. Every billow was made by Him a stepping-stone towards His disciples. It is not a fanciful dream, but a sober fact, that many of His people, by the power of that self-same life, have triumphed over their troubles, and have found them helps heavenward. The spirit is mightier than the body, the living stronger than the dead. The Christly spirit is the conqueror of materialism in thought and in fact here and hereafter, and your Lord can make your very hindrances, as you call them, your stepping-stones heavenward.—*A. Rowland.*

Ver. 49. *Christ not recognised.*—They did not recognise Him, because He came to them in another manner from that to which they were accustomed. They took Him for a spirit

announcing to them, according to the popular superstition, death and destruction, and they cried out for fear. So greatly may Christ be misunderstood by His people. We always think of Him after *one* fashion, and picture His coming according to *our* thoughts. If He comes otherwise, and approaches us, not in the way of prosperity, but upon the storm-tossed sea, we do not recognise Him and are afraid. When He draws nigh with hands full of blessings, He is welcome; but when He comes upon the waves of tribulation, we think it cannot be the Saviour. And yet it is He. What seems to us unmixed misfortune is often our greatest blessing. When we are afraid of perishing, He is just upon His way to preserve us.—*E. Lehmann.*

Ver. 50. *Christ's words of cheer.*—These words of Christ's, once uttered on the earth, are blent henceforth with heaven's eternal echoes. When the storms of affliction are raging; when the blasts of adversity blow; when the bolts of bereavement are falling, in dark and dreary days; when strength and pride are prostrate, and the lamp of life burns low; when dear delights and darling dreams are vanishing away; when the light of hope is dim, and the heart is sick with sorrow,—then for a time it seems as though our sky were for ever overcast, and the waters of grief were closing for aye above our heads. But there is One who rules the tempest; there is guidance in the waste of woe; there is deliverance deeper than disaster; there is a voice commanding, "Peace! be still." Anon the clouds shall clear, the day shall dawn, the countenance of God shall beam; for sadness, loss, and dire dismay are sent to man for discipline, not for destruction. Yet a little while, and the anguish that has pierced the breast shall purify the soul; the helplessness of self-despair shall change to the rest of reliance; all the solitude shall smile, all the shadows be bright, and all the sounds of frantic fear and



desolating doubt be whelmed in the sweet whisper of the Voice Divine, "It is I; be not afraid."—*E. M. Geldart.*

Ver. 51. *Lessons.*—1. It is commendable that they were affected with admiration and reverent fear of these great and miraculous works of Christ. 2. It is discommendable that they exceeded due measure in this astonishment and admiration of the miracles themselves, without due consideration of Christ's Divine power by which they were wrought.—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 52. *Want of consideration.*—They failed in this consideration to the very end, and it was not until after the Holy Ghost was given them that their faith became equal to the demands upon it. And so it seems to be with disciples always. Our trouble is the dull heart, the slow apprehension, the little faith. We do not consider the providence which has its witness in our past experience. We fail to apprehend our Lord's meaning in the questions which our circumstances, our work in the world, our obligations and duties, are continually putting to us. We miss the Divine purpose in the emergencies, the exigencies, which from time to time confront us. Least of all do we suspect that they are opportunities of faith—occasions for the exercise of spiritual power. Missions, charities, social reformations, and all the various forms of Christian enterprise—these things languish or fail chiefly because we, the disciples, cannot seem to get rid of the idea that man lives and must live by bread alone.—*W. T. Wilson.*

*Christ's training.*—It is one purpose of the training of the school of Christ to beget confidence in His power and grace; and often this is done by bringing to light our lurking unbelief. And that is an hour of blessing for us when fateful events put before our eyes, in unmistakable ways, our lack of confidence in the Lord, and shame us into higher faith.

*Hardness of heart.*—1. Hardness of heart is a main cause hindering the fruit and profit which we should reap by the means of grace. 2. There may be and is even in good Christians (yea, in the best) some degree of hardness of heart.—*G. Petter.*

*Lessons.*—1. The regenerate do in some measure see and feel their own hardness of heart, whereas the unregenerate have little or no feeling of it for the most part (Eph. iv. 19; Tim. iv. 2). 2. The godly not only feel but are unfeignedly grieved and humbled for their own hardness of heart; so are not the wicked. 3. The godly hate and constantly strive against it, using all good means to be rid of it, and to have their hearts softened more and more; not so the wicked, who bear with themselves, and willingly go on in hardness of heart (Rom. ii. 5). 4. Hardness of heart in the godly is a sin of infirmity; but in the wicked it is a reigning sin, bearing away, and prevailing in them.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 53. *Gennesaret*—the modern *el-Ghuweir*—is that fine rich level tract of country which was the principal scene of our Lord's earthly career. "Its nature is wonderful," says Josephus, "as well as its beauty. Its soil is so fruitful that all sorts of trees can grow upon it; and the inhabitants accordingly plant on it all kinds. The temperature of the air is so well mixed that it agrees with the different kinds. Walnuts, which require cold air, flourish there in the greatest abundance; palm trees also, which grow best in heat; fig trees likewise, and olives, which require an air that is more temperate. One may call this place the Ambition of nature, where it constrains those plants which are naturally enemies to one another to agree together. It is a happy strife of the seasons, as if every one of them laid claim to this country, for it not only nourishes different sorts of autumnal fruit beyond men's expectation, it preserves them a great while. It supplies men with the principal fruits,

with grapes and figs, continually during ten months of the year, and the rest of the fruits, as they become ripe together, throughout the whole year."

Ver. 55. *Helping others*.—1. In that this people shew their love by bringing the sick to Christ to be healed, we learn that it is a duty of love and mercy which we owe to such as are in misery and affliction, to afford them our best help and succour. (1) We profess to be fellow-members of the same mystical body of Christ, the Church. (2) We ourselves are subject to like afflictions. 2. How are we to help such as are in misery and affliction? (1) By our prayers to God to give them strength, patience, deliverance, to sanctify to them all their troubles, etc. (2) By

comforting and strengthening them in all their troubles, that they may be better able to bear them with patience. (3) By our best advice, counsel, and instruction. (4) By providing for them the best outward means of comfort and help in our power. 3. True Christian love is diligent and painful in doing duties and services of love to others as occasion offers. 4. We ought wisely to observe and take the best opportunities of helping and doing good to such as are in misery and distress.—*G. Petter*.

Ver. 56. *Touching Christ*.—The touch was—1. Needy. 2. Wise. 3. Prompt. 4. Believing. 5. Personal. 6. Unrestricted. 7. Efficacious.—*John Smith*.

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VI.

Vers. 3, 4. *Ignorant prejudices*.—The same blindness and folly appears on a smaller scale in our own day. Some years ago Professor Wilson wrote that "as the northern Highlanders do not admire Waverley, so, I presume, the south Highlanders despise Guy Mannering. The Westmoreland peasants think Wordsworth a fool. In Borrowdale Southey is not known to exist. I met ten men in Hawick who do not think Hogg a poet, and the whole city of Glasgow think me a madman."

Ver. 7. *The Divine call*.—The apostles are the Lord's "sent ones," models of Christ's servants who do His bidding in all the ages. Still, the supreme need of all who engage in Christian work is a sense of the Divine call. We may, therefore, ask how such calls are likely to come to us in these our times. They often come in *providential circumstances*, which bring altogether unsought work into a man's hands. In one of his letters Dr. Norman McLeod wrote in this way: "I have tried, at least for the last twenty-five years, to accept of whatever work is offered to me in God's providence. I have, rightly or wrongly, always believed that a man's work is given to him, that it is not so much sought as accepted, that it is floated to one's feet like the infant Moses to Pharaoh's daughter." No man will want work who waits on Divine providence with a full purpose of heart to do what is shewn to be God's will for him. They come in the *consciousness of possessing gifts*, and such consciousness often comes suddenly to men.

A good man, called to reside in a fresh city, visited a Sunday school, and was asked to take charge of the infant class in the absence of the usual teacher. As he had the little folk before him, the thought came to him and possessed him, "Here is your life-work. This is what you have to do." It was an inward impulse by the Spirit. In that work he has won good success. We limit our realisation of Divine calls by limiting our ideas of Christian work. When an army is going forth to war, what a multitude of great and small preparations are necessary! and how much the success of the expedition will depend on careful attention to the minute details! The credit of the triumph won does not belong to the soldier only; it is in part his who made the soldiers' weapons and the soldiers' clothes. In the Arctic Expeditions everything depended on the thorough faithfulness of each member in the things that were least. The cabin-boy had his part in the work as truly as the leader. David acted on this view of the claims of all who take any place in an enterprise, however lowly the place may be, when he insisted on having the spoil divided among those who "tarried by the stuff," as well as among those who "went forth to battle." We all need to recognise more fully than we have ever done, that the Divine call to work, and the Divine inspiration and grace for workers, come to givers, and collectors, and sympathisers, and those who pray, quite as truly as to those who preach and teach.

*Support by companionship*.—A father was

walking one day in the fields with his two children. The wind was blowing over a fine field of ripe corn, and making the beautiful golden ears wave like the waves of the sea. "Is it not surprising," said one of the children, "that the wind does not break the slender stalks of the corn?" "My child," said the father, "see how flexible the stalks are! They bend before the wind, and rise again when the wind has passed over them. See, too, how they help to support each other. A single stalk would be soon bent to the ground, but so many growing close together help to keep each other up. If we keep together when the troubles of life come upon us like a stormy wind, we shall keep each other up, when one trying to stand alone would fall."

Ver. 8. *Impediments*.—Armies most amply furnished with stores and comforts are most inefficient. The Zulu hordes, with but spear and shield, held long at bay the well-provisioned and disciplined troops of England. Baggage is well termed "impedimenta." It checks by just so much the quickness, and fosters by hardness. The soul heavily freighted with the luxuries and appliances of this life is at a disadvantage for the sudden movements and missions on which the Great Captain would send it.

Ver. 16. *Herod's thoughts*.—What were Herod's thoughts? Not long before a remarkable poem had been written in which the hero is represented as having entered by the Sybil's agency the dark regions of Tartarus, the abode of the spirits of the departed dead. There, crowding around him, are multitudes of shadowy forms, wearing the semblance of what they bore whilst on earth. Flitting in restless disquietude are the unburi'd dead; there, too, are parricides, dishonest trustees who have wronged widows and orphans, betrayers of the honour of wife and country, all showing in phantom face and visage that they are enduring the righteous retribution of the gods. And there, likewise, in more blissful regions are the ghosts who, when alive on earth, did good and honourable deeds. Amidst the throng he recognises his honoured father, whom, indeed, he had come to see, and he receives from him sundry admonitions as to the future of his race and country, and the duties thereby required. He inquires if the shades of the dead wish or are allowed to revisit the upper world, and the answer he receives seems to leave the question somewhat open, and is followed by a philosophical disquisition on the nature and origin of the creation. That poem was dedicated to Augustus, the immediate predecessor of Tiberius, the then wearer of the imperial purple, and had been rehearsed before him in the presence of his court. The poem, like

all great poems, reflected not only the thoughts of the age, but the thoughts of human nature itself. Had Herod heard it or read it? Most likely he had. Was he acquainted with the history of the Sybil, and the Sybilline Oracles? If so, there would be no antecedent improbability in the reappearance of John the Baptist. Nay, similar apparitions were reported to have been actually seen. Thus the ghost of the mighty Cæsar was said to have appeared to his murderer, and to have summoned him to a meeting after the fateful field at Philippi. Jewish traditions told, too, of the apparition of the prophet Samuel to Saul with the awful message, "To-day shalt thou and thy sons be with me." If, then, the Baptist were risen from the dead, no wonder that mighty works should shew forth themselves in him. But to whom should his first visit be more likely paid than to his murderer? and what would be the terrible nature of his message? In vain the licentious dances of voluptuous women, the flattery of his courtiers, the luxuries of his table! They could not stifle the whispers of the inward monitor; adultery and murder were ugly facts, and so Herod might have said with Juvenal,—

"If the anger of the gods be great, yet certainly it is slow;

If, therefore, they take care to punish all the guilty,

When will they come to me?"

*Sat.* xiii., l. 100.

*Stings of conscience*.—Henry of Essex, struck down in a duel, attributed his defeat to the imagined appearance of a knight whom he had murdered standing by the side of his adversary. Speaking of the man who planned the massacre of Glencoe, Macaulay tells us that Breadalbane felt the stings of conscience. He went to the most fashionable coffee-house in Edinburgh, and talked loudly about what he had done among the mountains; but some of his soldiers observed that all this was put on. He was not the same man that he had been before. In all places, at all hours, working or sleeping, Glencoe was for ever before him.

*Rustled by a breeze*.—There is a species of poplar whose leaves are often rustled by a breeze too faint to stir the foliage of other trees. Noticing the fact one day when there was scarce a breath of air, Gotthold thought within himself, "This tree is the emblem of a man with a wounded and uneasy conscience, which takes alarm at the most trifling cause, and agitates him so that he knows not whither to fly."

*A guilty conscience*.—King Theodoric could not endure the senator Symmachus, a good and virtuous man, so he caused him to be put to death. But after this proceeding he lost his accustomed high spirits, and took to



looking gloomy and soliloquising apart. One day while at dinner, on a fish being served, he thought he saw the head of Symmachus attached to the body, and this optical illusion caused his death.—Bessus, while surrounded by his courtiers, suddenly drew his sword, and rushing at a nest of swallows, hacked the whole family to death. Having been allowed time to recover himself after this unwonted exertion, he was asked the reason for his sudden outbreak, when, in a virtuously indignant tone, he replied, "Did you not hear them reproach me with the murder of my father?" It afterwards transpired that he was really guilty of this crime.

Ver. 18. *Testimony before kings.*—On one occasion St. Hugh is reported to have said to King John, "I trust you mean what you say; you know I dislike lies." He warned him also against trusting to a stone amulet which he wore round his neck, saying, "Trust not in that senseless stone, but in the Living Stone, the Lord Jesus Christ." And at Fontevault he pointed out to John a sculpture of the Day of Judgment, with a group of crowned kings being led away by demons to the smoking pit.

Ver. 20. *Reverence for the good.*—We may be reminded perhaps of our own monarch Charles II., who certainly revered Bishop Ken and several others like him, and revered them because they were just men, but who could not shake himself free from his lusts and submit himself to their teaching.

*Royal inability.*—Palissy, the famous French potter, was imprisoned in the Bastille, when nearly eighty years old, on account of his religious opinions. The King of France visited him, and strove to make him recant. "My good man," said the King, "you have been forty-five years in the service of my mother, or in mine, and we have suffered you to live in your own religion, amidst all the executions and the massacres. Now, however, I am so pressed that I have been compelled in spite of myself to imprison you; you will be burnt, if you will not be converted." "Sire," answered Palissy, "you have said several times that you feel pity for me; but it is I who pity you, who have said, *I am compelled*. That is not speaking like a king. I will teach you to talk royally. All your people and yourself cannot compel a potter to bow down to images of clay."

Ver. 25. *Unwomanly women.*—There is a similar instance in Roman history of a woman requiring the head of an enemy to be brought to her. Agrippina, the mother of Nero, who was afterwards emperor, sent an officer to put to death Lollia Paulina, who had been her rival for the imperial dignity. When

Lollia's head was brought to her, not knowing it at first, she examined it with her own hands, till she perceived some particular feature by which that lady was distinguished.

Ver. 29. *Relics of the Baptist.*—At Sebaste (Samaria) a dungeon is pointed out as the place where the Baptist was beheaded, though Josephus says it took place in the castle of Machærus. At any rate he seems to have been buried at Samaria, "between two prophets," Mandeville declares, "Elisha and Abdias." In the time of Julian some pagans broke into the tomb, burnt the bones, and scattered the ashes to the winds. Some small portions were collected by the Christians, and sent to St. Athanasius at Alexandria, where the Emperor Theodosius, in 396 A.D., built a magnificent church for their reception.

Ver. 31. *Labour and patience.*—Activity and the growth which comes by passive suffering ought always to make one single total life. Some of you will remember how in the old church at Innsbruck, among the magnificent bronze people who stand about the tomb of the Emperor Maximilian, is the great Godfrey of Boulogne, the illustrious Crusader. Upon his head he wears his helmet, and on the helmet rests a crown of thorns. The strange conjunction may mean many things. No doubt the crown of thorns is meant to represent the sacred cause, the rescue of the place of the Lord's crucifixion and burial, for which the soldier fought. But is not such a union of symbols a perpetual picture? The helmet and the crown of thorns—activity and suffering, fighting and growing, the putting forth of energy and the drinking in of strength—these two were represented, not as coming in by turns, not as chasing one another into and out of the life, but as abiding together, making one temper, filling one character. It is the helmet and the crown of thorns worn together on the consecrated head that makes the noble, useful, growing life.—*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*

*No leisure.*—If a stranger enters a busy factory, he cannot help being struck with the bustle and activity that pervade the whole establishment. Here a powerful engine throbs and works; there are glowing furnaces and red caverns of fire. Here are wheels and spindles and revolving bands; there, hurrying to and fro with rapid steps and skilful hands, the workpeople, all hastening to accomplish their respective tasks. And there is much similarity in the condition of our ever-active modern life—when every day, and every hour, seems filled with business, and the seasons of relaxation are equally crowded with pleasures and excitements, so that we seem to exist under a system of "high pressure." Ruskin's blunt

language calls it, "a machine-ridden and devil-driven age." The rough sarcasm of the man who said to his fellow-labourer, who was longing for rest, "You'll have time to rest when you are dead!" seems to give some idea of the business and activity of life in our great cities in this age. But there are many disadvantages that follow, for "he who lacks time to think lacks time to mend,"—*Dr. Hardman*.

*Periods of repose.*—For all organic life God has provided periods of repose, during which repair goes on in order to counteract the waste caused by activity. In the spring-time we see movement and stir in gardens, fields, and hedgerows, which continues till the fruits are gathered in and the leaves fall; but then winter's quiet again settles down over all, and nature is at rest. Even the flowers have their time for closing their petals, and their sleeping hours come so regularly, and yet are so varied in distribution among them, that botanists can construct a floral clock out of our English wild flowers, and tell the hour of night or day by their opening or closing. The same God who created the flowers and appointed the seasons ordained the laws of Israel, and by these definite seasons of rest were set apart for the people—the Sabbath, the jubilee year, and the annual festivals. Indeed, in every age and in every land, the coming of night and the victory of sleep are hints of what God has ordained for man.—*A. Rowland*.

*Human claims paramount.*—An old heathen philosopher bade his pupils beware of saying there was no time if a human claim was made upon their services. Never say "there is no time," if there is a ministry of mercy to be rendered to your race. If you want to see how active men may become under the urgency of necessity, stand on Ludgate Hill, and see how human life is being exhausted, how the energies of many are being worn out. Amid the activities of a London commercial life, and with all the incentive that the promise of wealth and greatness and aught else may give, you will find no man who can give such a record of a day's work as we find in the Gospels concerning our Saviour.—*D. Davies*.

*Vers. 34. Sympathy with the multitude.*—In the troublous times of the French Revolution a speaker in the Corps Legislatif asked, "Why do not our great men, our priests and philosophers, move and save the people?" A solemn voice replied, "Because they are cast in bronze." We who profess the service of Christ can never win the multitude until our hearts are clearly responsive to all their appeals for betterment of body and soul.

*Vers. 41, God the Provider.*—A boy was

once saying a grace before meat, which his Sunday-school teacher had taught him, when his mother, who was not accustomed to such things, said to him, "Why do you thank God for it? does not your father work for it?" But if the father had worked a thousand years he could not have made a grain of wheat, and it would have been an easy thing for God to deprive the father of the health and strength which enabled him to work, or to close the door through which he obtained employment and wages to purchase food; so that the boy was right, and we are all right when we pray to God and thank Him for our daily bread.

*Vers. 43. Wise economy.*—Two men set out for a ten days' journey across the desert. They each took ten loaves, a loaf for each day. The first day the younger man ate all he could, and then tossed the rest on the sand; but the elder man, having eaten sparingly, brought out two bags, into one of which he put all the crusts, and into the other all the crumbs. Day after day he did the same, and the younger man marvelled and smiled. But on the tenth day they discovered that they were still two days short of their journey's end. And now the younger man had nothing whatever to eat! But the elder now brought out his two well-filled bags, and both of them were very thankful to eat the crusts that day, and the crumbs the next.

*Vers. 45-51. The direction of the wind when Jesus walked on the sea.*—During a recent visit to the Sea of Galilee, I naturally spent some time over the Gospel narratives connected with this historic piece of water, studying them with the panorama of mountain, shore, ravine, and lake spread before me. It seemed to me that in one connexion at least—that of Christ's walking on the water—most of the commentaries I had read were at fault. Almost without exception they assume that the "contrary wind" which beset the disciples was a westerly wind, preventing them from reaching Capernaum on the west side. Now I believe that a study of the *three* narratives (Matthew, Mark, and John) bears out that the wind was actually from the *east*, and that the disciples were really pulling away from Capernaum, trying to get back to Bethsaida. In the first place, where was the Bethsaida spoken of in Mark? Most take it as the Bethsaida on the western shore, and translate πρὸς Βηθσαιδῶν as "towards Bethsaida"; but πρὸς may mean, as in the margin, "over against," in which case the town must be sought for on the eastern side. Mr. Haskett Smith, in his latest edition of Porter's admirable *Hand-book*, p. 253, says that the true site of this Bethsaida is a village named Ms'aidieh—a name virtually identical in meaning—situ-

ated on the fertile plain of el-Batiheb, exactly opposite to Tell Hüm, which he identifies with Capernaum. The hills immediately behind this ruin are generally admitted to have been the most likely scene of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. If this be the true site, as there is every reason to believe, then the narrative becomes quite clear. At the conclusion of the feeding of the five thousand, then, Christ sent His disciples on board the ship with the intention of crossing with them to the other side. It is said, He "constrained them" to go on board. Why did He need to do so? Many say they too were carried away by the enthusiasm of the crowd, and would have liked to make Him a king (John vi. 15), and the supposition is probable; but it may further be that, experienced fishermen as they were, they knew the signs of an approaching storm, and marvelled that their Master should compel them to go on board at such a time. Before a tempest on the lake there is usually a great sultriness in the air, the sky is murky and filled with misty, indefinitely shaped clouds, while the sun loses its brilliancy and appears of a pale sickly yellow. But Christ gave no reasons beyond the directions to pick Him up farther along the shore. Their ship (τὸ πλοῖον) was anchored a little off the shore, and communication was kept up by means of a single "punt" or "skiff," *πλοῦδιον* (John vi. 22). Having got on board, the disciples sent back the skiff, and waited for their Master. But the storm burst upon them, and blew them far out across the lake towards the west. It was my good fortune while in Galilee to witness one of the most violent tempests seen for many years. I am aware that the majority of squalls come down the Wady Hammâm and are westerly in character; but the storm I witnessed came from the south, and after blowing for half an hour in that direction changed to the *north-east*. I was assured by the boatmen on the lake who had been in this tempest that the only resource for a boat caught in such a squall is to let her drift, till the first violence is spent, when rowing may be attempted. Such was, no doubt, the case with the disciples. They simply had to "scud" before the seas and furious wind, till the initial fury had somewhat spent itself, when they took to the oars and began the weary work of rowing back to Bethsaida. This they continued till the fourth watch of the night, toiling against the heavy breakers and, perhaps, dashing rain. But their toil was in vain; they drifted more than they rowed. Christ saw them *βασανιζομένους ἐν τῷ ελαίνειν*, and came walking on the water to meet them. Why did they not see Jesus till He was "passing them by"? (Mark vi. 48). Simply because, if our supposition is correct, their backs were turned towards Him as He was coming *with*

the wind, while they were toiling at the oars *against* the wind. Immediately on receiving Jesus into the boat, John tells us, "the ship was at the land whither they went" (vi. 21). The Evangelist gives no indication that the incident is to be regarded as a miracle, nor need we necessarily suppose it to have been one. John says they had rowed twenty-five or thirty furlongs when they were met by Jesus. But as they were drifting more than they rowed, they were close on the other side when Christ appeared. From Ms'aideh to Capernaum is just about twenty-eight furlongs, so that when they took Jesus into the boat, and the storm was hushed, it was straightway that their ship was *ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*, i.e. touching the shelving, gravelly beach. The shore had been obscured before, partly by the gloom of night and partly by the spray and spindrift, which is such a feature of these Galilean storms. In conclusion, I may say that the homeletic value of this exegesis appears to me greater than on the common view. The disciples in this case were not rowing away from Christ, but, filled with a strong love for their Master, and in apprehension at leaving Him alone on the desolate shore, were doing all they could to pull back to Jesus, even though at the expense of enormous labour to themselves. It is a splendid instance of devotion, and shews that the fishermen had risen much in moral courage since the time of their former craven fear when Jesus was on board, and when He stilled the tempest.—*G. A. Frank Knight.*

Vers. 47-51. *Two aspects of life.*—In a gallery in Italy there are two pictures side by side by different artists. One represents a sea tossed by storms. Dark clouds hang over it, and the lightning-bolts pierce the sky, and the wrathful waves roll in fury. In the seething waters a dead human face is seen. The other represents a sea similarly storm-tossed; but in the midst of the angry waters is a rock, and in the rock a cleft with green herbage and flowers, and amid these a dove quietly sitting on her nest. These two pictures tell the whole story of human life in this world. The first is a story of life without Christ, unblessed by His presence and peace. There is storm everywhere, with no quiet shelter. The other shews the peace which Christ gives. There is no less storm. The waves roll as high. But there is peace. The rock represents Christ; it is in the cleft of the rock that the peace is found.

*Man's impotence.*—The howling wind, the raging waves, and the tossing, tremulous ship taught them what they needed to feel—their impotence. Ah! man in his season of prosperity and peace is prone to pride, disposed to cherish an overweening estimate of his character and position. It is a blessing when, even by a terrible tempest of adversity,



this insuperable bar to improvement is removed, and the man knows himself. On one occasion the great Napoleon arranged to review his fleet off Boulogne. Seeing that a severe storm was impending, the admiral in command sent word to the Emperor, advising that the position of the ships should be altered. Napoleon demanded obedience to his first directions, and the vice-admiral obeyed. The storm burst in terrific violence. Several gun-sloops were wrecked, and over two hundred soldiers and sailors were obliged to battle with the angry sea for life, and few escaped. The Emperor at once ordered the boats out to rescue the drowning men, but he was told that no boat could live in such a sea. Then, in the strength of his determination, he ordered a company of grenadiers to man his boat, and springing into it, he exclaimed: "Follow me, my brave fellows! Push on! Push on!" In vain the poor soldiers struggled at the oars. "Push on!" cried Napoleon. "Do you not hear their cries? Oh, this sea! this sea! It rebels against our power, but it may be conquered!" Scarcely had the words escaped his lips when a mighty billow struck the boat, and sent it and its occupants with terrible force high up the shore, leaving them like a stranded waif. Thus was the proud monarch taught *his* impotence. Thus also is self-confident, self-important, self-conceited man often driven back by life's storms—driven back upon the very first principles of a truly religious life—conscious weakness and necessary dependence.—*J. H. Hitchens, D.D.*

*Divine help.*—A lifeboat, with its precious cargo, was pitching and rolling in a fearful storm, when the old captain cried aloud to all, "Hold on! hold on!" The response came, "Ay, ay!" But there was one little voice which, in the sadness of despair, exclaimed, "I can't hold on!" Instantly the strong arm of the captain was thrown around that trembling child, and he was safe. So when Jesus sees and hears that, notwithstanding our utmost efforts, we feel we need Him, and crave His Divine help, He hastens to our relief.—*Ibid.*

*Thought for sailors.*—As Christ went to the relief of His distressed disciples, so we who profess to value the religion of Jesus should be willing to do all we can for our sons of the sea. They are a noble race, our sailors. They are ever ready to do a kindness to a distressed fellow-voyager; they have extraordinary opportunities for spreading the truth; and they are called to exercise an untold amount of self-denial. A ship was once in distress. Though the angry sea dashed and foamed with terrible fury, yet some noble sailors put off to rescue the ship's crew. After prolonged effort and peculiar danger, they succeeded in bringing the whole company safely to shore. A man of wealth, standing by the water's side, as spectator of

the men's heroism, was moved by the way they risked their lives. Pulling out his purse, he offered all the gold it contained to the coxswain and his men. The gift, however, was respectfully declined, the boatswain saying, "No, sir; we would save a man for nothing any day." Brethren, shall we be backward when the souls of such brave men are to be saved?—*Ibid.*

*Difficulty melting before endeavour.*—How often hast thou found thyself, at the entrance into a duty, becalmed as a ship, which, at first setting sail, hath hardly wind to swell its sails, while under the shore and shadow of the trees, but meets a fresh gale of wind when got into the open sea? Yea, didst thou never launch out to duty, as the apostles did to sea, with the wind in thy face, as if the Spirit of God, instead of helping thee on, meant to drive thee back, and yet hast found Christ walking to thee before the duty was done, and a prosperous voyage made of it at last?—*W. Gurnall.*

Ver. 48. *Toil.*—Half the ingenuity of mankind is expended in the attempt to avoid toil. The Lord's constraint, then, which sometimes snatches us away from pleasant ease and compels us to endure some hardness of toil, is a thing to be thankful for. No doubt Robert and Mary Moffat, among the idolatrous and warlike Bechuanas of South Africa, needed the stern discipline of toiling and fruitless years as a preparation for the larger successes of later times. The ten long years of darkness, without a glimmer of the dawn, tried and proved a faith which was imperishable. Before one convert rewarded their labours, a friend wrote to Mary Moffat to ask what thing of use she could send to her, and was answered, "Send us a communion service; we shall want it some day."

*Toilers.*—It is an interesting thing to look out from a suburban railway train, which enters London or any other large town on a high level, and as one rapidly passes along to catch a flying glimpse at the busy life beneath. Here one gazes down into a crowded street with its bustling throng—there one sees a factory with the spindles and machinery revolving behind the windows; or it may be we catch sight of the roaring fires of a foundry, or the humble toil of a washerwoman. But one general characteristic strikes the mind. It is a sense of the busy activity of men's lives—that they are "toiling." Now there is no reason why the idea of work should be an unhappy one. God in mercy has given mankind work to do, to make us useful and happy, and keep us out of harm; but the word "toil" implies the idea of over-work, of too much pressure, of too little time for rest and leisure; and many an excellent and hard-working man is in these days pressed beyond his powers, which is a great evil.—*Dr. Hardman.*

## CHAPTER VII.

## CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 3. **Off.**—Literally, *with the fist*, hence *vigorously*. The idea is, that the Pharisees had inaugurated an elaborate and painstaking ceremonial, which was now adopted by the whole body of the Jews. The Evangelist may possible mean, that it was actually a part of the prescribed ritual to keep the one hand closed while the other was being rubbed with it.

Ver. 4. **Wash.**—Either βαπτίσωνται, *take a bath*, or παρτίσωνται, *sprinkle water over themselves*. **Have received to hold.**—Accepted as suitable or worthy to retain (or hold fast).

Vers. 11-13. For true reading and rendering see R.V. When an unnatural son wished, either in a temporary fit of passion, or under the goad of an abiding selfishness, to get quit of the importunity of a destitute father or mother, he had just to say, in reference to whatever was craved, *Corban!* and then not only was he released from obligation to assist his needy parent, but was actually bound, as by the highest authority, to withhold the desired relief. Nor was it necessary that he should actually make the offering to the service of God; he might keep it himself, or do anything he chose with it, save only that he must not give it to his parent! Could human ingenuity go further in the direction of *annulling the Word of God?*

Ver. 18. **Are ye so, etc.**—Or, *What! are ye also void of understanding?*

Ver. 19. It is difficult to determine whether the words *purging* (or *cleansing*) *all meats* are a part of *our Lord's discourse*, or an *explanatory addition by the Evangelist*. The R.V., following Origen, Chrysostom, and Gregory Thaumaturgus, adopts the latter interpretation, reading καθαρίζων for the καθαρίζον of the Textus Receptus; and certainly the ελεγε δέ which immediately follows looks like an indication that the quotation of Christ's words, after being broken off for a moment, is now resumed. "He saith . . . (and in so saying He cleanseth all meats). And He said further . . ."—Dr. Jas. Morison, however, while defending καθαρίζων as the true reading, thinks that it "must apparently refer to the *draught*, which, by receiving the refuse, draws off as it were the impurities of the food, or those elements that remain after the nutritive ingredients have been eliminated and assimilated."—Mr. J. B. McClellan, on the other hand, decides against καθαρίζων, on the ground that although it has far the greatest external support, yet "as Wordsworth has noted, the itacism of ω and ο is so common in MSS. that this fact 'is of little weight against the ordinary rules of grammatical construction,' and, he might have added, against the certain requirements of the sense. It was not by the *appeal* and *explanation* to the disciples in our present verse, but by the *original* declaration to the multitude in ver. 15, that our Lord made all meats clean. Hence in the *verse before us* the masc. καθαρίζων is out of place in regard to our Lord. In every other reference it is grammatically untenable. With all confidence therefore we retain the neut. καθαρίζον, and construct it in apposition with the sentence."

Ver. 22. **Covetousness.**—The word is in the plural—πλεονεξίαι: "for this greedy lust of lawless *having* runs out on more lines than one: it is a moral monster of several tentacles: like the cuttle-fish, it puts forth many feelers armed with suckers. Avarice is a branch only of the root covetousness. Sometimes this pleonexy, or "amor sceleratus *habendi*," is associated with adultery: but in that case it less denotes the lust of impurity than connotes a lawless desire to overreach one's neighbour; for the adulterer defrauds the husband in seizing what is the husband's property. In short, love of pleasure, and love of money, and love of power are but so many forms of this "unbridled and unhallowed possessiveness." **Wickedness.**—Also in plural: *villainies*—active wrongdoing of all sorts. Jeremy Taylor explains it as "an aptness to do shrewd turns, to delight in mischief and tragedies; a love to trouble our neighbour and to do him ill offices; crossness, perverseness, and peevishness of action in our intercourse." **An evil eye.**—Niggardliness as to one's own possessions, and envy as to those of others. See Deut. xv. 9, xxviii. 54; Sirach xiv. 8-10; Tobit iv. 7-9; Matt. vi. 23, xx. 15. **Blasphemy.**—*Reviling* either of God or man. **Pride.**—*An overbearing attitude*. **Folly.**—*Senselessness or infatuation*. Such is the true nature of all sin.

Ver. 24. **Tyre and Sidon.**—Great commercial cities in Phœnicia. Tyre is mentioned in 2 Sam. v. 11; 1 Kings ix. 11-14, x. 22, xvi. 31: Sidon in Gen. x. 19; Josh. xi. 8; Judg. i. 31. Apparently Christ did not actually go into Phœnicia, but into the adjacent district, belonging to the tribe of Asher. See R.V.

Ver. 26. **Syrophœnician.**—So called by way of distinction from the Libyophœnicians of Africa, the Carthaginians.

Ver. 27. **Dogs**.—A diminutive, indicating the household pets.

Ver. 28. **Crumbs**.—Another diminutive. Wondrous humility!

Ver. 31. For true reading see R.V. *Through Sidon*—not necessarily the city. The object of this long *détour* was to obtain much-needed retirement and rest.

Ver. 32. This man's deafness had rendered him *hard-of-speech*, scarcely able to articulate intelligibly.

Ver. 34. **Ephphatha**.—The actual Aramaic word used. "*Be thou opened*—it is the man who is addressed; it was he who needed to be corporeally opened to the ingress of sounds, and to the ready egress of words."

Ver. 35. **String**.—The *bond* holding his tongue and impeding his speech.

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—23.

(PARALLEL: MATT. XV. 1-20.)

*The tradition of men*.—I. **Traditionalists conspiring against Christ**.—

1. Their evil design. See John vii. 1. 2. Their cunning method. They sought to bring in our Lord guilty of impiety by teaching His disciples to transgress the tradition of the elders.

II. **Traditionalists confounded by Christ**.—1. By shewing that they taught for doctrines the commandments of men which were in opposition to the commandments of God. 2. By shewing the folly of these human traditions.

**Lessons**.—1. A sad tendency of human nature—to honour God with the lips while the heart is far from Him. 2. The manifestation of this tendency (vers. 8, 9). 3. The real source of evil—the human heart. 4. The manifestations of the controlling power of the sinful heart (vers. 21, 22). 5. Real defilement before God—that of the inner source of evil.—*D. C. Hughes*.

*Christian controversy*.—Christ, when on earth, maintained two descriptions of intercourse with the people: the one was of a friendly and social nature, such as a friend maintains with his friend, when a congeniality of mind, combined with a similarity of habit, is found to subsist between them; the other was controversial, when proclaiming the true character, mind, and will of His Heavenly Father in opposition to the false opinions entertained respecting Him by the scribes and Pharisees, who, while altogether uninfluenced by the spirituality of what they taught, nevertheless maintained such strictness in the form and selfish regard for the moral requirements of religion, that, being irreplicable in the sight of men, they vainly conceived they must be equally so in the sight of God, forgetting or being wilfully ignorant that, whilst men judged from the appearance only, His all-seeing eye penetrated within the veil, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. Respecting the first of these two, namely, our Lord's social and friendly intercourse with men, we may well conceive the meek, the gentle, yet dignified Jesus a guest within the house of one of His disciples, unfolding the nature of God to those in company with Him, announcing Him a Spirit who cannot be deceived, and who claims from His creatures a "worship in spirit and in truth," which, when rendered, He willingly accepts, and mercifully pardons their transgressions. But though there were some who gladly received Him, and listened with the purest joy to His holy conversation, they were comparatively but few, and for the most part humble in their circumstances; whilst the great majority—the wealthy, the noble, and the learned—stood opposed to Him, ever on the watch to entangle Him in His talk, and find something whereof they might accuse Him to their rulers, and so be rid of One whose arguments they could not meet, and whose positions they could not controvert; yet with the most uncompromising integrity did the Saviour stand His ground, exposing the falsehood, the fraud, the errors,



or the hypocrisy of those who from their superior education ought to have been the first to recognise Him as Messiah and submit to His authority, combating wrong notions, rectifying mistaken principles, whenever or by whomsoever advanced. This controversial intercourse in no small degree characterised our Lord's ministry; nor could it be maintained without incurring all that hatred and opposition which the exposure of falsehood and error is sure to draw down on the person whose sense of moral responsibility would prevail to incite to it; still, disagreeable as is the office of setting those right who have been all their lives wrong, it becomes a solemn obligation, because involving the exercise of that charity or love which will not suffer us to see an immortal being persisting in a course obviously opposed to the will of God without warning him of his danger. With the psalmist the true and faithful servant of Christ can say, "All false ways I utterly abhor." Receiving his instructions from that Divine Master, he learns "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and "as a good soldier," serving a good Master, to "endure hardness" in the contention, when others "oppose themselves" and "would pervert the right ways of the Lord," knowing as he does that "there is no other name under heaven given among men [but Jesus Christ], whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12); nor can any man lay any other foundation on which to build his hopes for admission into heaven hereafter "than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11). Thus does the Bible furnish one great saving truth, and one only, which men are called upon to receive, and which, if they reject, they reject at their peril. To proclaim God's eternal and unalterable truth, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, is charity—love unfeigned. Would it be charity to suffer some dear friend or relative to languish from day to day upon the bed of sickness and not administer the medicine which the physician's skill had prescribed for a cure, lest it might prove nauseous and unpalatable? Would it be charity if, passing through a town at dead of night, and seeing a house on fire, we should refrain from rousing its inhabitants, through fear of disturbing their slumbers? Or would it be charity if, observing a blind man fearlessly to approach a precipice, we should be silent, suffer him to advance on his destruction, and not tell him of his danger? We protest against such charity as this. We prefer the discharge of our duty, as faithful ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ, commissioned to preach "repentance towards God, and faith in Him who has sent us"; we are ready, in maintaining the Lord's controversy with His people, to endure the world's misrepresentation. Nevertheless we do maintain that "our labour is labour of love," "the work of faith," the fruit whereof "is charity out of a pure heart." Our Lord did not shrink from the work which the Father had given Him to do because of the misconception put upon His conduct by the enemies of righteousness, nor was He restrained by the rude rebuffs of an insolent world; no, He loved even His cruel persecutors too well to suffer them to run upon their ruin without telling them the consequences which would inevitably result, should they pass from time to eternity without effecting their reconciliation with God, through Him, the only Mediator. In what moral darkness would the world now be plunged had error and falsehood been progressing for the last eighteen hundred years in a ratio similar to what it had been up to the period of the Saviour's manifestation in the flesh, to detect and dissipate the fearful gloom by the shining of the glorious gospel of truth into the hearts of His people! An accumulation of falsehood such as dissolved the tie of filial affection and filial duty, on the child's telling his aged and perhaps destitute parent that it was "Corban, that is to say a gift, by whatsoever" that parent might be profited by him, suffering the son "no more to do ought for his father or his mother"—thus permitting a corrupt and unnatural tradition, derived from sinful and selfish men, virtually

to repeal the fifth commandment, given by God Himself, and the unwritten expedient of human policy to supersede the unalterable will of Jehovah, proclaimed with a trumpet's tongue amidst thunderings and lightnings and smoke, which, the people seeing, removed and stood afar off. Had falsehood thus audaciously advanced, what bonds would have proved strong enough for uniting the relative positions of society, what barriers have restrained the overflowings of ungodliness, or checked the violation of natural affection, when thus sanctioned by uninspired and lawless traditions, usurping the sacred authority of God's Holy Word? The scribes and Pharisees ranked the foremost in opposing our Lord in all His teaching; their principal error consisted in a superstitious regard for "the traditions of the elders"; and to such a length did they carry their veneration for this description of authority that there was scarcely a passage of any moment in the sacred records that was not frittered away, and its plain and obvious meaning lost in the false glosses put upon it by these unauthorised means, "making the Word of God of none effect" through their traditions: their scrupulous exactness regarding external cleanliness made them unconcerned respecting that which was of higher importance, though hidden and unseen—the heart—and for the cleansing of which one (who, had they remembered him as an elder, it would have been well) evinced such anxiety that he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Their spring of action, however, arising from a desire to be seen of men rendered them totally indifferent about any and everything not having human applause for its object, so that the heart, the inward part, where God requires truth to dwell, was overlooked and unattended to by them. Such were the practices and such the doctrine which our Lord on the present occasion set Himself to refute, shewing how injurious in its effect was every deviation from the written Word; for however useful the tradition of the elders might be for the well-regulating of society or establishing habits of personal cleanliness, yet it would be infinitely better to forego it altogether, than by adopting it cast a slight upon a much higher authority. To teach for doctrines the commandments of men was a most grievous error, and fraught with the most dangerous consequences, for which reason our Lord fearlessly condemns it, and nobly reproves those who, whilst professing an honour for God's Word, would sanction a system which directly insulted it. "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you, hypocrites," etc. Then instancing the case of the fifth commandment, Jesus proceeds to shew that it was not external cleanliness, or the neglect of it—washing the hands on certain occasions, or omitting it—not one sort of meat or another; in fact, "nothing from without a man, entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man." What is in the heart the heart will, like a fountain, be sending up, until changed by Divine grace; for by nature it is a corrupt fountain, and consequently "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts," etc. Let us take any of these evil things which abide in the heart of the unconverted and natural man, and observe its process of defilement. 1. Look at covetousness, *e.g.* the love of money, justly called "the root of all evil." What can debase the soul more than this all-absorbing lust?—hours, days, weeks, months, and years, nay, a man's entire life, passed in contrivances whereby to increase his store of gold, involving too often falsehood and deceit in order to attain his object; and when attained, with what complacency does he regard his success! Nor does moderate success satisfy him, verifying the proverb, "Much must have more,"—religion discarded, its ordinances contemned, the Lord's Day itself polluted, that nothing may impede his unhallowed pursuit of gain. Whence come the murders, the thefts, of which our Lord speaks? Come they not from covetousness? While other evils are partial in their operation, this

takes no rest, knows no intermission, will have no repose. If the laws of the land protect the property of the owner from the aggression of the violent, and the penalty attached to the violation of the law restrains the covetous man from unlawfully attacking that which is another's, yet how near will he approach the forbidden limit! If he is honest, he is hardly so; if he does bear restraint, 'tis with a bad grace: the evil lust of covetousness withers every generous sentiment; the sons and daughters of adversity may pine and die ere the sordid mind of covetousness would be moved to commiserate or relieve; nought is known but self; gold is the idol to whose service not only the bodily energies but the affections of the heart and all the faculties of the mind are devoted. 2. Consider, also, the countless impurities contained under the head "evil thoughts." You are quite conscious of the vain ideas which run to and fro in the mind throughout the four-and-twenty hours of the day, so vain and evil that we should feel ashamed to speak of them to our nearest or dearest friend, and would be glad were they blotted from our memory the moment they recur to us; yet God searches and knows us, etc. (Ps. cxxxix. 1-4). 3. Look, again, at the insidious working of pride, often at the very moment when we think ourselves most humble,—at one time piquing ourselves upon the elegance or beauty of our persons; at another regarding ourselves with the utmost satisfaction on a comparison with some one whom we look down upon as an inferior, either in birth, or fortune, or education, or mental capacity. Examine one or all, or which you will, of "these evil things," and, oh! what an abyss of defilement forms itself, fed by that corrupt stream which ever flows from that polluted source, an unconverted heart, "deceitful" as it is "above all things, and desperately wicked." Well might Abraham call himself "sinful dust and ashes," or Job exclaim, "Behold, I am vile," or Isaiah, "I am a man of unclean lips": for who can know the depths of its depravity? Jesus knew them, and in our text declares them. And yet there is nothing over which we can exercise less control than our thoughts: a thought, a foolish or a corrupt thought, rises in the heart, and, like the blood in the natural system, is in an instant propelled through every inlet of the mind, and has fastened itself on us ere we are aware; and such is the strength and subtlety of that fiend who suggests the evil thought, that it not infrequently happens that what we desire to think least about is that which, through his agency, we think most of. I see from this review of my natural corrupt heart, says the newly awakened sinner, that it requires cleansing, must have renewing, must be fully converted, before I should either like heaven or be received in thither. But what can I do? It is not in my power to change my heart, and so produce a new current of thought, which would make me relish the pure and holy enjoyments of the redeemed,—the work is superhuman. Beloved, you are quite right; the work is superhuman. But though powerless in ourselves, though the work of converting the sinner's heart is superhuman, yet it is not impossible that Christ, by whom God the Father works, having put all things in subjection to Him, having given Him all power in heaven and in earth, power even to bend the stubborn and rebellious heart of His sinful creatures, He can cleanse and purify the fountain, so that the stream of thought shall run pure and holy. What says St. Paul, after confessing himself a wretched being, unable to deliver himself from the body of death, a naturally wicked heart? "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." Christ has changed and renewed the hearts of millions. The way in which He accomplishes this important change is worthy of attention. First He sends His Holy Spirit into the heart, whereby the sinner is enabled to take a view of that corrupt stream which flows from it, and upon an examination of the "evil things" spoken of in our text to feel its sinfulness, then acknowledge in prostrate humility those particulars



which offend us most to the Lord Jesus Christ, not in the least palliating them, but laying them open to Him in all their fearful aggravations, till we abhor ourselves, and cry, Unclean! unclean! His next influence upon the heart is to make the sinner renounce himself as bankrupt in righteousness, and desire above all things the imputation of Christ's righteousness as his only hope. From thence he is led to recognise Christ as greater in his behalf than he who seeks his destruction. These feelings grow with his growth and strengthen with his strength, until sin is hated and shunned; and though the remains of indwelling sin may tease and harass the Christian, yet it has altogether lost its supremacy in his heart. Thus is the poor sinner changed by the Holy Spirit from the power of Satan to the power of God, and from rejoicing in the perishing things of time and sense to rejoice in God his Saviour, who has done such great things for him: from that time, also his conversation is in heaven, from whence he also looks for the Saviour.—*M. J. Taylor.*

*Insincerity in worship.*—The great sin of hypocrisy, laid by our Saviour to the charge of the Jews in His time, had been charged, long before, upon the same people by Isaiah. A sin thus chargeable upon the same people at various periods of their history may justly be considered as a national sin. But then it must be borne in mind, that it was a sin on account of which it was not competent to the Gentile world, that is, to the great bulk of mankind, to reproach the Jewish nation, or, on account of their own exemption from it, to flatter or felicitate themselves. If the Jew satisfied himself with the outward confession of God and the lip-honour he paid Him, the Gentile world did not pay even that, but offered a debasing worship to idols. So far from being in a condition to look down upon the Jew, the Gentile had a great step to take to be even upon a level with him. The Jew was so far right that he believed in "one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." The Jews' worship was, in form and externals, such as God Himself had appointed, and their notions of Himself such as He had taught them. How then is it spoken of with disapprobation instead of praise, both by Isaiah in his time and our Saviour in His? There was the outward shew, not the inward feeling; great professions, but little practice; long prayers, and cold hearts. A question then arises whether we of these times and this nation are concerned in our Lord's remark. Now I hope there is neither flattery nor self-deceit in saying that it is not true of us in the same sense and degree as it was of the Jews. I find what I think to be error, wrongheadedness, an uncharitable and angry spirit, in the language and writings of men, on religious subjects, but little that I can presume to call insincerity. Then, again, the endeavour to make up by high professions and scrupulosity in little things for laxity in great things is a vain endeavour now. Men are disgusted by such attempts. They look with a more indulgent eye upon the open and avowed violator of God's laws, than upon him who, by a shew of piety, would cover or make up for a selfish and licentious life. But although the sin of hypocrisy should not be chargeable, as a national sin, upon us at this time, in the same degree that it was upon the Jews in our Saviour's time and in the time of Isaiah, it still remains for each man to ask himself whether it be chargeable upon him as an individual in any degree or sense. I fear we shall find that there is a sense in which it is chargeable upon us all. I. I lay the case of the blasphemer out of consideration, as one that can consist only with an estranged state of the heart from God, and as one not falling within the range of our Lord's observation, and I would ask whether we are not oftentimes forgetful of God, when engaged, not in things which He has forbidden, but even in things which He has commanded. When we pray, for example, are we then all of us, are

we any of us, so attentive as we ought to be to the work we are about? It is the mind, the serious and attentive mind, that gives life to forms and effect to prayer. It is, no doubt, a difficult thing to keep the attention fixed upon the proper object of worship, and to prevent the intrusion of idle thoughts. (1) One reason of this may be, that that object is invisible, and "no man hath seen God at any time." It was, I presume, as an expedient to help attention, and as a resource against the difficulty we speak of, that image-worship came to be so much practised. (2) Another reason is, that when we are engaged in our ordinary work-day business, we are wont, without ceasing from that business or neglecting it at all, to give the mind leave to range and wander through a variety of subjects. Practice has made us so perfect in those operations whereby we have long earned our bread, that we can perform them correctly with a degree of attention so slight that we are hardly conscious of exerting it. Now this is not only pleasant, but innocent, if the thoughts be employed upon things innocent. But this will not do in worship. If the mind is not in this work it cannot prosper. We can say our prayers, no doubt, as we can do other familiar things, with little exertion of attention, and give the thoughts leave to settle on other subjects; but when we do so we pray in vain, or, more properly speaking, do not pray at all. That is wanting which is essential to prayer—an attentive mind and an awakened heart. It has been recommended to those who lament their proneness to this wandering inattention in prayer not to clothe their private addresses to God with any words—not to say, but as it were to think their prayers to God. This advice proceeds upon the supposition that the method of using thought alone, unclothed in words, may prevent self-deceit, and make us at once perceive that if we are not praying internally, with the understanding and the feelings, we are doing nothing. 2. Again, we may be said to worship God in vain, and to draw nigh to Him with our lips while our hearts are far from Him, if we continue in sin, or intend so to do. The principal subject of a good man's prayers is grace—the grace of God, and the help of the Holy Spirit to his naturally infirm endeavours to resist temptation. But such prayer is poisoned at its source, if it be not faithful, if it be not accompanied with a faithful and unreserved intention and willingness on the part of him who prays to part with his sins and with whatever causes him to sin. 3. These things make worship vain, and they spring from a defect in the heart, that is, in the disposition with respect to God, which it concerns us before all things to remove. It is to be removed by more positive and earnest endeavours than have yet been used to keep the mind intent upon its work, and by cries for the help of that Holy Spirit which is said to "help our infirmities," especially in that work.—*A. Gibson.*

*Zeal and diligence in false worship no ground of comfort.* —I. **It is a vain and unprofitable sign to support and comfort ourselves by, that we are diligent in the worship of God, if not commanded by Him.** —1. It lieth as a necessary duty upon all to worship and serve God. Now this worship and service may be either internal, or external, or mixed, compounded of both: internal consists in our love of God above all things, faith and hope in Him, obedience to His commands, which Scripture preferreth before all external worship; external is that of adoration and inclination of the body, kissing the hand, bowing the knee, dedicating temples, altars, and offering of sacrifices; mixed is compounded of both these, such as calling upon God's name by petition and thanksgiving. 2. This worship and service of God is not given to God because He needs it or is made more happy thereby. God is no more better by our worship than the fountain is because a man drinks of it, or the sun because a man seeth by the light of it. Such do not advantage the fountain or the sun, but their own selves.

So God hath appointed this worship, not that He might receive good from us, but communicate good to us. 3. Such is the infinite excellency and majesty of God, that we are to tremble and greatly to be ashamed of any worship or service we tender to Him. The angels, that are not conscious to the least sin in themselves, but are pure above the sun, that cannot call themselves dust and ashes, yet cover their faces before God. 4. God only may appoint that worship which He will accept of. The deformity of an ape lieth in being so like a man, and yet not a man; so doth the loathsomeness of all false worship lie in this, that it imitateth the worship of God, but indeed it is not so. 5. Our Lord briefly lays down what is acceptable worship unto Him (John iv. 22). To worship God in the spirit is to have a spiritual and holy inward frame of heart in all our addresses to Him. This is worshipping of God in a way the most of men are not acquainted with. Oh, it is a hard matter to have a spiritual man in prayer, hearing, and other worship! And indeed this is the soul and life of the service of God. The other way of worship is in truth, which by some is explained against hypocrisy and guile of spirit; for this God complaineth of, that they drew nigh with their mouths, but their hearts were far from God. Lastly, as a Father, they must worship, though humbly, yet not slavishly and servilely. Seneca speaketh of the superstitious, intimidated person, that while he worships God he provoketh Him. 6. Howsoever worship of God be commanded by Him, yet such is the nature of all moral duties that the obedience to them is required before any instituted worship. "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"; go and learn what that meaneth, saith our Saviour: insomuch that comparatively to obedience God is said not to command these at all. 7. The heart of man is exceeding subtle and ingenious to palliate over all false worship: insomuch that there never were superstitious abuses of God's worship, but that there have been learned men and wise men to plead for them.

**II. Why men addicted to false worship, though they much admire themselves, yet are indeed vain men, and lean upon vain props.**—1. Because always such persons have the bitterest enmity against true godliness. 2. Here is no ground of confidence in these, because they are consistent with the ordinary practice of gross and sinful courses. 3. If a man may not rely or trust on the instituted worship of God, yea, nor on the graces wrought by God's Spirit in us, then much less in a worship of his own. If thy own graces are not helmet strong enough to repel God's wrath, then thy own voluntary worship is but as so many cobwebs, when a furious tempest bloweth upon them. 4. These are not to be relied upon, which are vain and unprofitable, and so frustrate of that end we expect. Now the text saith, "In vain do they worship Me"; other duties commanded by God, though they are not pillars to be leaned on, yet they are not vain. God saith not to Jacob, to seek His face in vain, but all this service is lost labour: "Who hath required all these things at your hands?" Now of all things to labour in vain in religious matters is the saddest expense of all. After all that zeal thou art never a whit the nearer heaven, thou art no more endeared to God. Thy state is noways spiritually advantaged: yea, though it be a fruitless labour one way, yet it is not another way; for there is a fruit of these labours, but it is bitterness and wormwood—God is more provoked by thee. 5. That which is a sad curse and fruit of former sins, that can be little comfort to any man that rightly considereth of things. Thus we say it is an absurd thing to be proud of clothes, for in that thou needest clothing it is an argument thou art fallen from integrity and innocency. But in this matter the curse of God is more wonderful upon thee, for all that admiration and applause of false worship is inflicted upon thee as a punishment, because thou hast not received the truth in the love of it. 6. These of all men are in a most unsafe estate (notwithstanding their security), because they are in a most absolute contrariety and indisposition for receiving of



Christ, in whom only our souls have rest. Publicans and harlots went to heaven before the Pharisees. Why so? Because the former were sooner convinced of their sin, their undone estate, and so more willingly flying unto Christ.—*A. Burgess.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *Fault-finding.*—Those see most faults in others who have most themselves. None are such critics of small faults as those guilty of grave ones. Beware of fault-finding. He that censures others cures not himself.—*R. Glover.*

*We must not always follow great men.*—Those who for their place and calling should be greatest friends and favours of Christ and His followers are often greatest enemies and readiest to oppose them. 1. See how unfit it is to tie ourselves to the example of great men in the Church in matters of religion—not safe always to follow them, for so we may with them become the worst enemies of Christ and His Church. 2. Admonition to great men in high place in the Church to use their dignity, place, and office to the honour of Christ and good of His Church.—*G. Petter.*

Vers. 3, 4. *Lessons.*—1. It is the manner of hypocrites to tie others to their own practice and example in matters of religion, and to censure all uncharitably who do not conform to them even in trifles. 2. Hypocrites put religion and holiness in outward rites, ceremonies, and superstitious observances, and think that by performance of these they become holy and acceptable before God. 3. Superstition makes wise men become foolish, absurd, and childish, in busying and troubling themselves about trifles and toys.—*Ibid.*

*Rabbinical washings.*—The legal washing of the hands before eating was especially sacred to the Rabbinist; not to do so was a crime as great as to eat the flesh of swine. “He who neglects hand-washing,” says the book Sohar, “deserves to be

punished here and hereafter.” “He is to be destroyed out of the world, for in hand-washing is contained the secret of the Ten Commandments.” “He is guilty of death.” It was laid down that the hands were first to be washed clean. The tips of the ten fingers were then joined and lifted up, so that the water ran down to the elbows, then turned down so that it might run off to the ground. Fresh water was poured on them as they were lifted up, and twice again as they hung down. The washing itself was to be done by rubbing the fist of one hand in the hollow of the other. When the hands were washed before eating, they must be held upwards; when after it, downwards, but so that the water should not run beyond the knuckles. The vessel used must be held first in the right, then in the left hand; the water was to be poured first on the right, then on the left hand; and at every third time the words repeated, “Blessed art Thou who hast given us the command to wash the hands.”—*C. Geikie, D.D.*

The “*tradition of the elders*” was an after-growth of the Captivity, originating not improbably with the Great Synagogue, out of which the Sanhedrin was developed. The reverence and care for Holy Scripture, revived by Ezra, and fostered by later scribes, were handed down from generation to generation, and treated with so much honour that the highest authority was sought for their origin. Some Rabbi, bolder than his predecessors, put forward the theory that God had given to Moses not only the Ten Commandments, but also at the same time a full explanation, even in the minutest detail, of all their applications. This Oral Law, he said, had been revealed by Moses to Aaron

and his sons, and the memory of it was cherished and handed on without any loss or diminution in the progress of transmission. As soon as such a view of its origin had gained acceptance with the people, its authority became equally binding upon the conscience with that of the Written Law, and the estimation in which it was held even higher. In lapse of time it received its interpretation at the hands of the Rabbis, and the disquisitions, illustrations, and additions grew into a great body of doctrine; and after the Jewish motto "Commit nothing to writing" had been forgotten, these were all combined in a vast collection, under the title of Gemara, or Talmud. The publication in writing of the Mishnah itself, as the Oral Law was called, had preceded it by two hundred years. It was issued authoritatively by Rabbi Judah, the Holy, at the close of the second century of the Christian era.—*Dean Luckock.*

There were two familiar sayings among the later Jews which enable us to understand how widely traditionalism must have conflicted with the teaching of Christ. "The words of the elders," they said, "are of more weight than the words of the prophets"; and, even more startling than this, "The Mosaic Law is as water, the Mishnah as wine, and the Gemara as hippocras" (a richly spiced drink, most highly esteemed).—*Ibid.*

*The traditions of the elders* were all, without exception, the product of the later ages of the Jewish dispensation in the time of its decay and fall, when it was at its worst; whereas the opinions and practices which are invidiously called "traditions" in these days, *i.e.* the opinions and practices of the earliest Fathers of the Christian Church, are the products of the earliest ages of the Christian religion, when it was at its best, and was least contaminated with the influence of the world from without, and kept most pure by godly discipline from within. The opinions of the Fathers on the interpretation of Scripture, when they

can be ascertained, are far more likely to be in accord with its real meaning than any opinions or practices of later ages.—*M. F. Sadler.*

Vers. 6-9. *The external preferred.*—It may seem almost incredible that men should leave the simple principles of righteousness for a region so barren and burdensome as that of external observances. But the secret is not difficult to find. 1. External acts can be seen and felt by oneself, and so can give complacency. 2. They can be seen by others, and thus can gain credit. 3. They are easier than walking with God. To approach Him needs the courage of purity and penitence; and to take His guidance requires perpetually the self-denial and consecration of faith.—*R. Glover.*

*The abuse of ceremonies.*—It cannot be too carefully noticed that no condemnation is passed upon these rites of purification in themselves. Had the Pharisees recognised their symbolism and deep moral significance, had Jesus been certain that when they washed their hands they thought of or prayed for purity of heart and life, He would have been the last person to rebuke them, however much they multiplied external forms and ceremonies. These are useful as stepping-stones to higher things; but the moment they begin to satisfy in themselves they become snares and lead to superstition.—*Dean Luckock.*

Vers. 6, 7. The whole Old Testament history was prophetic of Christ and of those around Him in this respect, that everywhere in the continually recurring contest between light and darkness, between truth and error, there were displayed the types of that which, in its highest energy, developed itself in and around Christ.—*H. Olshausen, D.D.*

Ver. 9. *Irony sometimes lawful.*—In that Christ here, by this sharp irony or taunting speech, derides the gross superstition of the scribes and Pharisees,

we may gather that it is lawful to deride and scoff at the sins and unlawful practices of others, especially at the gross and notorious sins of the wicked and ungodly. See 1 Kings xviii. 27; Isa. xlv. Yet some cautions are to be observed for the lawful use of such ironical reproofs of sin. 1. They must proceed from a holy and upright affection in such as use them, viz. from zeal for God's glory, and hatred of sin, and not from private malice or revenge. 2. They must tend to the right end, viz. God's glory, and the good of the party reproofed, that by such a sharp and taunting reproof he may, if possible, be brought to be ashamed of his sin, and to be touched with remorse for it, as also to grow in dislike and hatred of it: not the disgrace of the person is to be sought, but the disgrace of the sin reproofed, and the reformation of the person. 3. Such taunts and ironies are to be used against sin in due manner, *i.e.* after a grave and serious manner, not with shew of lightness or vanity.—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 15. *The heart the seat of defilement.*—1. Material processes cannot produce spiritual effects. 2. The true source of spiritual pollution is the heart. The internal translates itself into the external. 3. But the principle itself implies that the body may be defiled. See 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. The sins enumerated by our Lord (vers. 21-23) shew themselves in words and deeds, and defile the tongue, the eye, the hand, etc. They who commit them yield their members as servants of iniquity unto iniquity (Rom. vi. 19). 4. Our Lord did not sanction indifference to the use and abuse of food and drink, to habits of personal cleanliness and filthiness. The principle He lays down witnesses to the contrary. These matters are under our control, and indicate our tastes and tendencies, our desires, choice, will—in one word, our character. 5. No man, however, can put his heart right, or keep it right. For the first is needed the converting,

for the second the sustaining and restraining grace of God. True morality needs a supernatural foundation and continuously bestowed Divine energy. The very idea of inward purity points us to the Holy Spirit and the new birth.—*J. R. Gregory.*

Ver. 16. *An important rule.*—This rule must needs be of very great importance to Christians. For our Great Master—1. Calls the people unto Him on purpose to tell them only this. 2. He requires of them a particular attention. 3. He requires it of every one of them without exception. 4. He exhorts them to endeavour thoroughly to understand it. 5. He lets them know that in order to do it they have need of a singular grace and a particular gift of understanding. It was for want of understanding this rule that the Jews still remained Jews, adhering to a mere external way of worship. It is for the very same reason that numbers of Christians, even to this day, serve God more like Jews than Christians.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 17. *Dulness in spiritual matters.*—1. See here how great dulness and slowness of capacity there is, even in the best Christians, to conceive spiritual and heavenly matters when they are taught them. 2. The best should not be ashamed to acknowledge their own ignorance in spiritual matters to such as are able to teach them, that so they may be better informed and instructed. 3. It is commendable in Christians to move profitable questions unto their teachers or others.—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 18. The Saviour refers to the material things that enter into a man through his mouth. His principle, however, is applicable, on a higher plane of reference, to spiritual things too which come in from without. These, however noxious, cannot of themselves defile a man. "The man within the breast" must act in reference to them before guilt can be contracted.—*J. Morison, D.D.*



Ver. 19. *Lessons*.—1. The wisdom of God shewn in the frame of man's body, ordaining every part for necessary ends and uses. See how it should be in the body of the Church: there should be no unprofitable member, but even the meanest should so live as to further the good of the whole (1 Cor. xii. 25). 2. Howsoever the belly serves for necessary use in man's body, yet it is for such use as is base and vile in comparison of most of the other parts of the body. See then the sin of those who serve and worship their belly, as if they were born for no other end but to eat and drink.—*G. Petter*.

Vers. 20-23. *Heart-defilement*.—This is a hard saying, but our conscience acknowledges the truth of it. We are not the toy of circumstances, but such as we have made ourselves; and our lives would have been pure if the stream had flowed from a pure fountain. However modern sentiment may rejoice in highly coloured pictures of the noble profligate and his pure-minded and elegant victim; of the brigand or the border ruffian full of kindness, with a heart as gentle as his hands are red; and however true we may feel it to be that the worst heart may never have betrayed itself by the worst actions, but many that are first shall be last,—it still continues to be the fact, and undeniable when we do not sophisticate our judgment, that "all these evil things proceed from within." It is also true that they further "defile the man." The corruption which already existed in the heart is made worse by passing into action; shame and fear are weakened; the will is confirmed in evil; a gap is opened and widened between the man who commits a new sin and the virtue on which he has turned his back.—*Dean Chadwick*.

Ver. 20. *Inward corruption*.—That which St. James saith of the tongue (iii. 6) is much more true of man's corrupt heart, without the sanctifying grace of God renewing and changing

it, and purging it from this natural filthiness and corruption of sin. 1. Labour to see and bewail this great corruption of our own heart. To this end examine and view our own heart often in the glass of God's law. And we must deal thoroughly in searching out the corruptions of the heart, remembering how deceitful it is, and how hard to know it. 2. See what need for us to get our heart purged and cleansed from this sink and puddle of sin which is in it. (1) By the power and efficacy of God's sanctifying Spirit. (2) By the ministry of the Word. (3) Get true faith, apprehending God's saving love and mercy in Christ. 3. See by this how great a work is the work of regeneration and sanctification, whereby the heart must be purged from such a world of wickedness and sea of filthiness. Such a work is not easily done, or soon. The whole time of our life is too little for doing it thoroughly.—*G. Petter*.

*The thoughts*.—Nothing seems of less consequence than a thought—so silent, swift, subtle, is it, and yet in that lightning-flash of the brain, in that throb of the heart, in that fiat of the will, in that airy nothing, all the vast things of man's history, its grandeur and its grief, have their birth. The heart of man is the gateway of strange worlds, and through it are ever gliding thoughts fraught with infinite consequence to the individual and to the race. Let not the Church of God abandon that appeal to reason, to conscience, to the hearts of men, which is the true preaching of the gospel of Christ.—*W. L. Watkinson*.

*Imagination*.—Says Jacob Boehme in a deep passage, "All now depends on what I set my imagination upon." Setting his imagination upon the kingdom of God, upon the highest objects, patterns, and callings of the spiritual universe, the believer conquers successively all selfishness and sensuality, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. All depends upon what we set our imagination—upon the ideals we choose,

upon the vivid realisation of those ideals, upon the daily striving toward those ideals, upon the faithful, confiding surrender of the soul to those ideals.—*Ibid.*

*Inward renewal needed.*—We need all the faculties and powers of our inward being renewing. We need our conscience to bear us witness in the Holy Ghost; our imagination to eye supremest ideals of light and beauty, and urge its flight thitherto as the eagle seeks the sun; our will by virtue of a Divine strengthening to become imperative and invincible; our affections to be filled, dominated, by the sovereign love of God. Nothing but this new heart and right spirit will meet the case. Let us begin here, and all will be well. Out of the heart shall proceed good thoughts, and out of them all fair and noble characteristics and actions.—*Ibid.*

Vers. 21-23. *The things that defile.*—At the head of the list Christ places the “evil disputings” so fresh in His memory from His encounter with the Pharisees; then adulteries and fornications, the outcome of a corrupt imagination; murders, which proceed from anger; thefts and covetousness, from secret promptings to overreach others and gain more than one has a right to; knaveries and fraud; lasciviousness or reckless insolence, which outrages the decencies of life; the malicious glance and slanderous tongue; the proud and haughty bearing which bespeaks the self-centred man; and last in the list, the comprehensive sin of foolishness, which embraces every senseless, wicked act.—*Dean Luckock.*

Ver. 21. *Evil thoughts.*—Evil thoughts in the heart are like internal diseases of the body, very dangerous and very difficult of cure. Stealthy in effecting a lodgment, but most tenacious in maintaining their hold; singly appearing of little consequence, mere specks of human infirmity upon the soul, but soon spreading and leavening the whole being with their corruption, constitut-

ing our character and deciding our eternal state,—we cannot afford to make light of these enemies of our peace. A constant watchfulness against their approach, promptitude in repressing their incursion; the diligent study, the conscientious practice of every method that may help against their power,—this is the bounden duty of every Christian who sincerely desires to keep himself unspotted from the world, or to recover himself from the dominion of past sin. St. Paul speaks of God as “a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart,” and declares that “all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” In the prophet we have God asserting this prerogative (Ezek. xi. 5). And so the psalmist appeals to His omniscience (Ps. cxxxix. 1). And thus we are told on the eve of the Deluge, Gen. vi. 5, 6. The indulgence of an evil thought is as much an offence against God as an injurious speech or a blow is an offence against our neighbour. Even under the Old Testament we have the wise man declaring, Prov. xxiv. 9. And in the New Testament, in the Sermon on the Mount, our Saviour still more expressly declares that the gospel law reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart (Matt. v. 22, 28). And by this law shall we give account in the end. And it is *just* that it should be so. The prevailing character of our thoughts is the best index of our spiritual state. For it is not always what we actually do, but what we would do, if we could, what we wish for, and think about, and take delight in—this it is which constitutes our moral character for good or evil, and decides our state before God. Evil thoughts are the beginning and source of all iniquities. We think we are safe. We mean to draw back in time. But some sudden impulse takes us; our resolution gives way, and we fall headlong. And though, by mercy above our deserts, we *do* stop short of any flagrant act of sin, yet the mere indulgence of evil thoughts imprints a character and

stamp upon the heart which years of sorrow and conscientious striving will often fail to obliterate. The soul becomes engrained with evil, and evil becomes connatural to the soul. It acquires a sad facility for uncharitable suppositions. It becomes wonderfully apt at finding fuel for its vanity in the most indifferent circumstances. It will contract fresh stains from objects upon which a purer mind would rest without experiencing any affection of evil; while grosser suggestions will fall upon such a diseased soul like sparks upon tinder, and inflame it into evil passions at once. And this will last on, when those sins have been utterly renounced, when the soul has checked itself in its wilfulness, and has turned sincerely to God, and is striving to walk daily in His fear, and to cleanse itself from iniquity; still will the shadows of his past life darken the repentant sinner's path, and embarrass his efforts in religion; and in his holiest moments, even upon his knees, before the altar, will some train of evil thought start up suddenly, and take possession of that soul which has been used formerly to delight in them. 1. The most general, perhaps, are vain thoughts. Young people are most open to them, but they are congenial enough to all. We are all too apt to dwell with complacency upon the thing we excel in; we long for an opportunity of displaying our abilities; we please ourselves by imagining how much better we could have acquitted ourselves than a neighbour has done; we plan all sorts of schemes for the future, abandon ourselves to the most extravagant reveries, picture imaginary scenes and positions, and fancy how we should act in them. The habit of indulging such thoughts is weak and foolish indeed, but it is more, it is sinful. It is an artifice for gaining food for our vanity out of an imaginary future, when the ordinary tenor of our daily life yields too humble materials to please us. It dissipates our energies, it injures our religion, and estranges us from God. 2. In close connexion with vain

thoughts we must place discontented thoughts. By overrating his ability, and by dreaming of the future, a man gets dissatisfied with his present lowly position, and thinks himself equal to something much more trying and important. 3. Next I may name uncharitable thoughts. We are all too apt to take dislikes, to impute motives, to rehearse over to ourselves the affronts we have received, to take pains to make out that we have been ill used, and be glad when we have fixed upon some reasonable ground for being angry. 4. But I have yet to name the most evil of all those evil thoughts which proceed out of the heart and defile a man; I mean impure thoughts—the most dangerous and the most difficult to conquer of all our inward corruptions; and yet one, it is to be feared, in which too many indulge without much compunction, thinking it enough so long as they abstain from grosser acts of shame. It is to this sort of evil thoughts that Bishop Beveridge's words seem particularly to belong, when he recalls the experience he had had of the devil's temptations, and the working of his own corruptions; by which he says: "I find that there is no sin I am betrayed into but what takes it rise from my froward thoughts. These are the tempters that first present some pleasing objects to my view, and then bias my understanding and pervert my will to comply with the suggestions. So that though the Spirit of God is pleased to dart a beam into my heart at the same time, and shew me the odious and dangerous effect of such thoughts, yet, I know not how or why, I find a prevailing suggestion within that tells me it is *but* a thought, and that so long as it goes no further it cannot do me much hurt. Under this specious colour and pretence I secretly persuade myself to dwell a little longer upon it; and finding my heart pleased and delighted with its natural issue, I give it a little further indulgence, till at last my desire breaks out into a flame, and will be satisfied with nothing less than the enjoyment



of the object it is exercised upon.” 5. There are other evil thoughts less under our control. We are liable to be afflicted by blasphemous thoughts, by unbelieving thoughts, and by desponding thoughts, which may indeed owe their origin to past sins, but which may be injected by Satan, or induced by bodily weakness, or arise from ignorance or misapprehension of revealed truth. When our minds are thus disordered, we are not fit judges of our own estate, and our remedy is to have recourse to some discreet and learned minister of God’s Word, and to open our grief. 6. Against the other evil thoughts I mentioned our remedy lies more within our reach, and various rules may be given for resisting them. The first and most obvious is prayer—painstaking, earnest prayer. Avoid all occasions of sinning. Avoid the great snare of having time on your hands. Avoid vicious books. Forbear to read the details of crime in the public prints: they can do you no good; they may corrupt your mind with suggestions of evil. And when evil thoughts assail you, flee them at once. I do not advise any one to argue against them. Your plan is to turn your attention at once to something else; to go and do something, to think of something, different. And accordingly we must store our minds with subjects of meditation; we must get hymns and psalms by heart, or favourite pieces of Scripture; and directly an evil thought assails us, we must begin and say to ourselves one or other of these, and we

shall so succeed in foiling the enemy of souls. And when we *have* sinned in thought, we should take notice of it in our nightly examination, and humble ourselves for it before God. We must strive, we must hope, and we shall overcome. We have the Spirit of God pledged to us to transform our affections and desires, to make us new hearts and new spirits, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.—*C. F. Secretan.*

Ver. 22. *An evil eye.*—Oh, how can we hope with Job to “see our Redeemer,” with these eyes so vain, so proud, so wanton, so polluted, so prostitute! They had need be well washed with the eye-water of penitent tears, and then with the blood of Christ (Matt. v. 8; Ps. cxix. 37; 1 John iii. 3; Job xxxi. 1).—*Bishop Gauden.*

*The eye the window of the soul.*—The mind looks through the eye; so does the heart. Lactantius beautifully compares the eyes to glazed windows, through which the mind beholds. “And therefore,” adds he, “the mind and will are often discerned from the eyes.” Salvianus uses the same comparison of *windows*, but adds that hence “all wicked desires enter into the heart through the eyes, as through their natural avenues.” But the Saviour unfolds here a far profounder philosophy, when He says that the evil desires *arise in the heart*, and come looking out wistfully at the eyes.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

# MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 24—30.

(PARALLEL: MATT. xv. 21-28.)

*The Syrophenician woman.* What a powerful principle faith is, and how great its success, we have a striking example here. It shews itself to be of Divine original, and that there is no discouragement which it will not overcome.

I. *The excellence of this woman’s faith.* 1. The disadvantages under which she laboured. She was a Syrophenician, an alien to the commonwealth of Israel, and had been born and educated amongst idolaters. It discovered great liberality of mind in her to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth and to apply to Him for a cure. She had got over the prejudices of her education and country,

and entertained the grandest apprehensions of His ability; nay, she acknowledged Him as the true Messiah, the Son of David, and presented her petition to Him in that character. This shews how sovereign and free the grace of God is, and that it is not confined to any one nation under heaven! This Divine seed is sometimes sowed in a seemingly neglected soil, and carefully cultivated by the Heavenly Husbandman, to teach us that He can plant it anywhere and bring it to great perfection. It is not where He taketh the greatest pains that He receiveth the largest returns, but where the children of men are diligent in improving the advantages they enjoy. 2. The severe trial to which it was put. Our Lord knew well what virtue was in her, for He was the author of it; and He proved it, for His own honour and her consolation. He concealed His regard under the appearance of displeasure. One would have thought that, when she first applied to Him, He would have taken some notice of her, and have given her a hearty welcome; she was a stranger, and who would not be kind to strangers? Yet we are told He answered her not a word. This was so unlike His common manner, which was all condescension and sympathy, that the disciples were surprised at it, and interceded in her behalf. This application of the disciples probably encouraged the poor woman, and her heart would bless them for it. But it drew from Christ a reply more forbidding than His silence, and which plainly indicated that she had no reason to expect any favour from Him. "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." What a disheartening reply was this! Was it not enough to drive her to despair? Methinks we may suppose her reasoning thus with herself: "What an unhappy creature am I, to be born a Greek, and consequently to be excluded from the mercy of Jesus of Nazareth! Can it be that His heart is so contracted as to be confined to the house of Jacob, and must all the rest of mankind perish? I will not, I cannot entertain so mean an opinion of Him; I will go and prostrate myself at His feet, and implore His compassion; if He will not hear me, I can be no worse; but perhaps His bowels may be moved, and He will vouchsafe me His blessing." Could anything be more melting than an address of this nature? Yet our Lord resisted, and would not be importuned; He told her the great impropriety, nay, the injustice, of complying with her petition: "For that He would not starve the children to feed the dogs." One would think that an epithet of this nature would have roused her pride and inflamed her anger. But she had a better spirit, and had learned humility. "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the children's crumbs." I confess I am no better than a dog; but may I not have the portion of a dog? The argument was irresistible. The compassionate Jesus felt the force of it, and yielded immediately. 3. The greatness of the reward conferred upon it. There is no grace which our Lord hath distinguished with such marks of approbation as faith, because there is none which confers such honour upon Himself.

**II. Why our Lord delays granting those petitions which are pleasing to Him, and which He is determined to grant.**—1. To make us prize the blessings He hath already bestowed. Mankind, in general, put a much greater value upon something which they want than upon all that they possess. Nay, such is the perversion of our natures, that we will not allow ourselves to enjoy the blessings which Providence hath conferred upon us, but torture ourselves in seeking after what it hath denied. Ought not so perverse and unreasonable a disposition to receive a severe check? May not God justly contract His hand, and restrain His bounty, when we prove insensible to His former beneficence? 2. To teach us patience and submission. In the pride of our hearts we are apt to think ourselves neglected, if we do not receive a speedy answer to our prayers; hence sullenness and discontent are ready to spring up in our minds,

and we are apt to accuse Him of coldness and disaffection. But are these becoming dispositions in dependent, guilty, necessitous creatures? Is it not our duty to wait with patience the event of the Divine counsel, and to acquiesce cheerfully in its proceedings? Is it not more for the honour of God, and for our own interest, that His will be obeyed, and the purposes of His providence accomplished, than that we should immediately obtain what we ask? I acknowledge that chastisement is unpleasant and cross to corrupt nature; but is not corrupt nature what we wish to have subdued? Must not our Father in heaven use the most effectual means for extinguishing it? 3. To make us more fervent and importunate. Do not our prayers too often resemble rain in the time of frost, which freezes before it reaches the ground? A cold petitioner in some measure begs a denial. We provoke the Almighty to detain us at His throne, or to send us empty away, to arouse us from our lethargy, and to excite in us greater fervour. 4. That we may be examples to others of faith and patience. Who would grudge to be held a little longer in doubt, if to be the means of exciting in some humble fellow-Christian a holy boldness and patient perseverance? Is it not enough to satisfy us that "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"? Therefore let us go with boldness to a throne of grace, that we may find mercy and grace to help us in every time of need.

**Lessons.** —1. The great advantage of affliction. It was the distress of this poor woman's family which brought her to Jesus, and she had reason to be thankful for it all her life. When adversity hath this happy effect, we should make it welcome, and kiss the hand which dispenseth it. 2. Though this poor woman's faith was very urgent, it was not presumptuous. Oh that all of us may be actuated with a similar spirit! It is to be regretted that there are some so full of themselves, and have so high an opinion of their own importance, that in their addresses to God they resemble creditors who have a demand to make upon Him, rather than debtors who owe Him every obligation. 3. Genuine Christians need not be discouraged, though an immediate return is not given to their prayers. God may treasure up their petitions, as He does their tears, in a bottle, reserving the answer to some future occasion. Let me add, that we sometimes blame our Father in heaven unjustly, and may actually receive a blessing without knowing it. It is one thing to obtain a favour, and another to have a lively sense of it. God frequently dispenseth His richest gifts whilst He conceals the hand which bestoweth them. May He graciously condescend to hear our prayers and send us an answer of peace!—*D. Johnston, D.D.*

*The Canaanitish mother.*—In all the parts of this narrative we may read that which concerns ourselves most closely. For what else are our lives, with all their varying accidents and issues, than, as it were, the shadows cast forward into all time by these dealings of the Son of God with man whilst He stood amongst us in the flesh? Have we not each one our own burden? Whether it be some outward or some inward trial; some family sorrow or some heart-ache; the secret wasting of some spirit-wound, some pang of conscience, or some besetting temptation; or whether it be the world's hollowness and the thirst of the soul for truth, —have we not each our need of Him amid evils of which He can be the only Healer? And further: do not characters now divide off and part asunder even as they did then? Are there not those who, like the Jews, know not the office of this Healer; who hear all His words, and see all His signs, and languidly let Him pass, or angrily murmur at Him or blasphemously drive Him from them; from whom He passes, even to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, to pour on others the blessing they refuse? But then there are also those who do seek Him with their whole heart,—opening to Him their hidden affliction; bearing seeming refusals in the strength of faith and the patience of



an unfeigned humility; and still looking for crumbs, if they may not eat the children's bread; daring to hope against hope; ready to take up with any portion He shall give them; and waiting still on Him, because they cannot turn to any other.

I. There is the lesson taught us by the Jews, that **He does pass away from those who will not stay Him with them**; that He goes on and heals others; and that they die unhealed, because they knew not "the time of their visitation." And the root of this evil is here pointed out to us: it is a want of faith, and, from this, a lack of the power of spiritual discernment.

II. But there is also here the lesson of the woman of Canaan; and this has many aspects, of which the first, perhaps, is this, that by every mark and token which the stricken soul can read **He to whom she sought is the only Healer of humanity**, the true portion and rest of every heart,—that He would teach us this by all the discipline of outward things; that the ties of family life are meant thus to train up our weak affections till they are fitted to lay hold on Him; that the eddies and sorrows of life are meant to sweep us from its flowery banks, that in its deep strong currents we may cry to Him.

III. And, once more, there is this further lesson, that **He will most surely be found by those who do seek after Him**. And this is taught us here, not by a mere general assurance that we shall be heard, but in a way which enters far more practically into those difficulties with which every one who has striven to pray earnestly finds earnest prayer beset. For here we see why it often happens that really earnest and sincere men seem, for a time at least, to pray in vain—why their "Lord, help me!" is not answered by a word. He has a double purpose herein: He would bless by it both us and all His Church. 1. How could His Church have been taught always to pray, and not to faint, better than by such a narrative as this? 2. For ourselves, too, there is a special mercy in these long-delayed blessings. For it is only by degrees that the work within us can be perfected; it is only by steps, small and almost imperceptible as we are taking them, yet one by one leading us to unknown heights, that we can mount up to the golden gate before us. Much are we taught by these delayed answers to our prayers. By them the treasure of our hearts is cleared from dross, as in the furnace-heat; our earthly will is purified and bowed; the passionate fervency of unchastened prayer is deepened into the strong breath of humble supplication; patience has her perfect work; we are kept looking up to Christ; and by His grace, even as we hang upon Him, we grow like unto Him; we dwell in Him, and He in us.—*Bishop S. Wilberforce.*

*Christ's mercy.*—The unusual conduct of our Lord, as seen in this story, has been often attributed to an intention of calling into full consciousness the faith which He knew to exist in the woman's heart, and thus at once to deepen it in Himself, and to elicit an example which should serve, as it has served, for the instruction and support of all Christian souls. But, without excluding this consideration, there are some circumstances in the case which seem to give a more obvious explanation of the first motive of our Lord's conduct, and may give the story a still closer application to ourselves.

I. The people had just been raised to the highest point of enthusiasm for Christ, and, as a double consequence, His disciples were ready to make Him a king by force, and the Pharisaic party were moving into active hostility. On account of this twofold excitement, then, He withdrew into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He was therefore specially concerned to abstain from using His miraculous powers; and had He at once healed the woman's daughter, the purpose of His retirement might have been at once frustrated.

II. But there is a further consideration which shews that His repellent

answers were more than formal excuses.—"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." That was a definite principle of His ministry. Consequently when this woman appealed to Him, she was asking Him to depart from an important principle of His ordinary conduct. His ministry was governed by certain laws which had been determined for purposes of the highest import, and it was no easy matter for Him to depart from them.

III. This aspect of the narrative adds a great attraction and force to the bearing of the story upon ourselves.—We too are living under certain definite laws of God; and if we transgress them, then under all ordinary circumstances we must expect the consequences, and we make a grievous mistake in appealing lightly to the mercy of God. Doubtless His mercy is infinite; but so are His truth and justice, and His determination to uphold the laws He has laid down. Our Lord longed to help the woman, but it was hard for Him to infringe the rule which He had laid down for His own guidance.

IV. Thus our Lord's conduct is first a warning.—It illustrates what must often be the feeling of God towards us when we have violated our covenant with Him, and expect Him to have pity on us simply because of the misery we have brought upon ourselves.

V. But the example of this woman is also given for infinite encouragement.—By the side of these rules of His ordinary government there is ever present a higher principle or a higher law—that of the response of perfect love to genuine and entire faith.—*H. Wace, D.D.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 24. *Christ's departure from Galilee.*—Take warning from Christ's departure from the active ministry in Galilee. His own rejected Him. They were deeply moved; conscience told them to yield their hearts to Him in meek obedience, and they would not. So He left them. Christ is near each one of us, far nearer to us than He was to those scribes and Pharisees; He demands, therefore, more of us than He did of them; and if we will not give Him our hearts, He will leave us to our worst enemy—our own miserable selves.

*Jesus in Phœnicia.*—To the Jerusalem Jews this north-land was a sink of idolatry. Even the Galileans spoke of their frontagers as "dogs," "heathen," "unclean," "outcasts." Uncircumcised aliens, left unextirpated by Joshua and his conquering soldiers, were these Gentiles. Out of this ill-omened quarter had come Ethbaal and Jezebel, and the priests of Astarte, border-ruffians in the age of the judges, and the raiders who in the days of the kings had

desolated Israel. Apparently only twice was Syrian contact wholesome to the Holy Land and people. These were when Hiram the king and Hiram the architect, with Phœnician timber and Phœnician art, contributed to the glory of Solomon's Temple, and again when Elisha won trophies of grace in Naaman and his company. Except one or two bright lines of association, the whole spectrum of memory was that of darkness. Added to all else was the thought of Phœnicia, the slave-land to which Judah's children had been sold in the days of Joel.

*Christ not hidden from the seeking soul.*—It is easy to hide Christ from those who do not want Him. But the heart which feels its need of Christ, and cannot do without Him, will find Him wherever He is hidden.

Vers. 25-30. *Persistent effort* is not in itself true faith, but it always accompanies true faith. Thunder never split the heart of the oak tree, but it always accompanies the lightning's flash, and tells to all about of the light-

ning's presence. The farmer does not shew his faith by lying in his bed and waiting for God to plough and harrow his field and sow his seed. He ploughs and harrows and sows, and shews his faith in then waiting for God to give the increase. God's winds are always blowing; the man of faith spreads his sail before God can fill it. Does not this story shew—1. That the Lord is humane enough, tender enough, to satisfy all mankind. 2. That even if He seems silent at first, and does not grant our prayers, yet still He may be keeping us waiting only that He may be gracious to us at last. 3. That He can feel for mothers and with mothers; that He actually allowed Himself to be won over—if such a word may be used reverently—by the wit and grace of a mother pleading for a child.—*C. Kingsley.*

*Lessons.*—1. Any trouble, however grievous, is a blessing, if it brings us to seek Christ and His help. 2. There are none who may not come to Christ for help. 3. No true blessing is too great for Christ to grant. 4. Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.—*J. R. Bailey.*

*Christ's dealings with His people.*—1. Remember how various are the dealings of the Lord with His people who pray to Him, answering at once with some, answering after long delay with others, and not answering at all with a third class. 2. Examine into the causes of delay so far as we can, or of failure in prayer. Is it that we ask for what is contrary to His will and providence, and not that His will be fulfilled? Is it that we seek temporal things first, and not spiritual—not “first the kingdom of God”? Is it that we are indulging some known sin, and so our prayers are not acceptable? Or is it that we have not the dispositions which the heathen mother had—of faith and fervour, of lowliness and perseverance? 3. Let us imitate her, and wait upon God until He is gracious to us. Take especially her perseverance in prayer, and copy it. “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find;

knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Let delay enlarge the desire of the soul. Ward off impatience and despair. “The kingdom of God suffereth violence; and the violent take it by force.” Let us struggle on till we gain the grace we are seeking, and say, with the patriarch of old, “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.”—*W. H. Hutchings.*

*Bringing others to Christ.*—This case is one out of a multitude in which the immediate sufferer is brought to Christ not by his own prayer, but by the prayer of others. Have you ever seen anything like this in the symptoms of this raging pestilence of sin? Have you ever known the patient fascinated by its illusions, or crazed with its mad delirium, or hardened into apathetic indifference, or inactive in the helpless torpor of despair, so that if anything is to be done in his behalf, it must needs be done by others? And do you find no encouragement, in such stories as this, to believe that those who seem to be past the power of praying for themselves may be taken up in the arms of natural affection and brought to where the Lord may lay His hands upon them and heal them? Each bond of social influence, each tie of natural affection, may be a means that God shall use to bring them within the circle of the attractions of the Cross, “drawing them with the cords of love, with the bands of a man.” Oh, doubly blessed such an affliction which brings to Christ not one alone but two—preparing the sufferer to receive the grace, and teaching the sympathiser how to pray for it!—*L. W. Bacon.*

*Prayer for others.*—It is said truly, that necessity makes a man pray for himself, but charity for another; and in charity the rule is good, the nearer the dearer: and therefore, seeing our children next unto ourselves, and our wives our other selves, are nearest unto us, it is good reason we should wish them all good, especially that they may be dispossessed of the devil.—*Dean Boys.*



Ver. 27. *Christ's reluctance to depart from His plan of work.*—Jesus' work was proceeding in a certain method. He could depart from that method, but He must depart for a reason. When a departure was suggested, the first thing that came up to Him was the great law and purpose of His life. It was only when the reason became very strong that He was willing to depart. It would seem that there was a necessity for adhering to the ordinary course of His work, yet not an absolute but a relative necessity, which could be surpassed, but had first to be moved aside by reason.—*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*

*Words with tender tone.*—Hard words. Yes: but all depends on how they were spoken—on Christ's look, and the tone of His voice. Did He speak with a frown, or with something like a smile? There must have been some tenderness, meaningness, pity, in His voice which the quick woman's wit caught instantly, and the quick mother's heart interpreted as a sign of hope.—*C. Kingsley.*

Ver. 28. This verse contains three important principles for our guidance in the spiritual life. 1. Agree with the Lord, no matter what He says. "Yes, Lord." 2. Think of another truth, and urge it with Him as a plea. "Yet." 3. Whatever happens, have faith in the Lord, and possess thy soul in patience. His dealings may be inscrutable, but the foundation of them all is love.

*Encouragement from a severe word.*—Instead of "Yes, Lord: yet," the R.V. gives "Yea, Lord: even"; and the more exact rendering brings to light a valuable truth. The old translation, it has been truly said, expresses the way in which our mind too generally looks at things. We fancy that we set one truth over against another, whereas all truths are agreed, and cannot be in conflict. Out of the very truth which looks darkest we may gain consolation. This woman did not draw comfort from another truth which seemed to neutralise the

first; but as the bee sucks honey from the nettle, so did she gather encouragement from the severe word of the Lord: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." She said, "That is true, Lord, for even the dogs eat of the children's crumbs." She had not to turn what Christ said upside-down; she took it as it stood, and spied out comfort in it.

*Are we pleading the better covenant?*—This woman had God's old covenant against her; we have His new and better covenant on our side. Are we pleading it with anything like the earnestness she shewed? Do we pray for others with such pertinacity and importunity?

*Reading between the lines.*—Like a skilful musician, she caught the strain and finished the strophe. To the Jewish ear the Master had begun to tell the parable of elect and reprobate, covenant and aliens, of the home and the outcasts, of the children and the curs. She, with faith's power and in the light of that eye, read between the lines the tiny parable of the children and their pets, even the parable of humanity and its Saviour. Her gentleness made her great; her trust made her mighty. No longer Canaanitish or Syrophenician, she is for ever in sacred story as the woman great of faith, on whose will was laid answer to prayer from the Holy One of God.

*In the love of God there is ample room,* if only men will enter in at the right door, and pursue it in the lawful way. What Esau imputed to an earthly father, when he said, "Bless me, even me also, O my father," the same fulness of bounty do the hearts of "such as shall be saved" impute to their Heavenly Father, and to His express image, Jesus Christ." And so did this woman's heart impute it to Him, when she replied, "Truth, Lord," etc. It is clear she caught glimpses, at least, of the true and living God, who "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." It is clear she had a lively notion *what kind of* "Master" God was. She had also a notion of

the necessities and dependence of man upon God. What she calls "the master's table" is, in the enlarged application of the parable, the common order of Providence. She herein silently acknowledges, at the same time, the justice of God in giving different gifts to men,—to some abundance, whether of wealth or health; to others poverty and sickness. She does not dispute the order of Providence, but acquiesces in it.

Ver. 29. *Perseverance rewarded.*—

There is no withheld mercy that the soul requires which is not waiting simply for the opportunity to abandon itself in the utter bestowal of its grace upon the needy soul. Persevere, even if you have pleaded for years and seemed to get no entrance into the ear of God. The man, wrestling with the burden of this life and finding it too heavy, who by-and-by kills himself because he thinks there is no salvation at the hands of God, how cowardly his conduct is, and how poor it is, beside the impetuous faith with which this poor woman wrestles with the stone athwart the torrent of the mercy of her God, until by-and-by it is turned away and the torrent pours itself into the help of her need!—*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*

*The limitations of mercy.*—All through the record of mercies and the miracles of Jesus there runs a certain subtle tone which puzzles us. I seem to hear, as I read, the sound of a great sea of might and mercy shut in behind necessities which it cannot disobey; I seem to hear it clamouring to escape and give itself away along long stretches of the wall which shuts it in; and then I seem to see it bursting forth rejoicingly where some great gate is flung wide open, and it may go forth unhindered to its work of blessing. So seems to me the story of the power and love of Jesus held fast under the conditions of the faith of men.—*Ibid.*

*The outside and inside healing.*—The child was healed; but no more than

the mother. The demon was cast out of the child; but no more than it was out of the mother. The child was brought back to the mother. Yes, and the mother was brought back to God. It was a double miracle that was performed. There was an inside one and an outside one; and the inside one was the more resplendent and glorious. God's mercies are to be counted not on the outside, but on the inside. If they make you selfish, and hard-hearted, and unsympathetic, and you grow close, and you separate yourself from your fellow-men, and you are ungodlike in the proportion in which you are prospered, woe be unto you! If God's external mercies make you better, they are tolerable. If God's chastisements make you better, thank God for them. Those unfeeling words, that cold look, and that indifferent way of Christ—what a gush of feeling they brought out from this woman's soul! That pushing away—how it brought the pleading hands out, as it were! how it caused every tendril and fibre of her heart to clasp and cling to the Saviour, and made her refuse to let Him go! It was out of the apparent winter of His face that her summer came. It was out of this repulsion that her blessing came. Any dealing that makes you better inside is beneficent. And do not feel, when God is dealing with you severely, that He has forgotten you. It takes a great while to answer some prayers. You cannot be transformed in an instant. You cannot be changed between twilight and sunrise. When, therefore, you pray that God will regenerate your nature, will you not give Him time to do such a work? When you pray for the reconstruction of your character, will you not wait till God can perform such an act of mercy? If, looking at the interior, He sees that the work can be expedited, He will expedite it; but you must be patient.—*H. W. Beecher.*

*Bring your wants to Christ.*—Bring all your wants to Christ, and always bring them with a consciousness that

for the answering of your prayer the best of all persuasions and arguments is a heart that will be made better by having its petitions answered of God.

It may be that you stand between your desires and God's mercies. Seek to keep the way clear between your soul and His.—*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 31—37.

*The deaf-mute healed.*—I. **The journey of Christ, and the place where the miracle was performed** (ver. 31). From His short and necessary excursion unto a foreign territory Christ speedily returned to the land of Judea, the proper scene of the ministry of Him who was sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. With a view, probably, both of allowing time for the resentment of His enemies to be moderated, and of instructing numbers whom He had not visited in the regular course of His journeys, He makes a circuit through the rich and fertile district of Decapolis, or “the Ten Cities,” the most populous part of the well-inhabited province of Galilee. His stay seems to have been short, for none of the Evangelists mention any remarkable event to have taken place there. He hastens to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the birthplace and residence of many of His disciples—the country of a numerous people who listened to Him with more attention and respect than the proud and bigoted inhabitants of the capital and its neighbourhood.

II. **The nature of the disease to be cured** (ver. 32).—This man had not power in those organs which are necessary for the reciprocal communication of ideas and sentiments. We are little accustomed to consider the vast importance of the gift of speech—a *gift*, I believe, in the strictest sense of the term, from our Supreme Benefactor; for articulate language, an art so complicated and yet so necessary in the earliest infancy of society, can scarcely be considered as a matter of human invention. No theory has proved satisfactory, or thrown light on the subject, but that one which ascribes it to “the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.” It is indeed a good gift, on which all the other improvements of society depend. Without it man must be still almost a solitary individual. In the midst of society he were alone—guided in his difficulties by no kind instruction, soothed in his calamities by no soft voice of sympathy, gladdened in the day of strength by no cheering note of joy, comforted in the hour of darkness and sorrow by no kindred spirit to tell him of another and a better life, of the high destiny of man, and of the grace of a merciful God.

III. **The request of the people** (ver. 32).—There is a modesty in the request which gives a favourable idea of the character of the petitioners. They were evidently humane; for they bring their distressed neighbour for a cure. They were humble; they present the opportunity of working a miracle to Him whom they believed to be possessed of the power; but they did not demand nor even solicit the exertion of His Divine energy. They believed in the compassion of Christ; and they present to Him an object of pity, and pray that He will bless him. To lay the hand on one is the natural and significant action of goodwill, of a benevolent wish and friendly inclination. The people expected that by this action Christ would communicate the particular blessing which the case required. They did not suppose that He was to use any vain arts, like the false pretenders to miraculous power; but that by His own inherent energy He would effect the cure of which the laying on of His hand marked, according to the usual significant form, the wish and the accomplishment. The people knew that Christ was raised far above all vainglory, and that by a simple indication of His will He could produce a miraculous cure.



IV. The manner in which our Lord proceeded in performing this miracle (vers. 33, 34).—He would not expose the man, while He is communicating with him by the necessary signs, to the idle gaze of the indifferent, or the impertinent observations of those wicked companions who followed Him everywhere, and might now be mixed among the friendly observers, and who might alarm the patient, who could not hear nor understand their words, but might comprehend their gestures so far as to produce in him uneasiness and fear. Retiring a little from the crowd, “He put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue.” You are aware that from the situation of this man, precluded from all conversation with his neighbours, from all the means of knowledge which depend on spoken language, he must therefore have had a very imperfect notion of our Lord’s character and power. There was no way by which Christ could excite his attention or communicate His own views or purpose but by appropriate signs, to the use of which he was probably accustomed. As the ears of the deaf seem to be closed, He puts His fingers on them; and as the tongue is supposed to be fastened, He touched it with a wet finger, to intimate, perhaps, to the wondering patient and his friends the nature of the relief He was about to convey. Then observe our Lord’s sympathy—“He sighed.” He felt for the degraded situation of the man before Him, excluded from society, whose converse cheers us amid the calamities of life—from that moral instruction which elevates us above them, from the knowledge of God and that religious truth which prepares us for the enjoyment of Him; and by a sigh, the frequent attendant of inward and silent prayer, especially when the mind is oppressed by grief, He shewed how much His heart was affected, and how ardent His wish to grant relief. It might be that there were some circumstances unknown to us which made this man a peculiar object of pity. But whether general or particular, it was evidently His sympathy with human wretchedness which agitated His bosom, that tender feeling for all our sorrows which renders Him so fit a High Priest for men compassed about with infirmity. Observe our Lord’s piety in this action: “Looking up to heaven.” Through all His life, from His earliest years till it was finished on the Cross, His reverence for His Heavenly Father is conspicuous. His will was the guide of His actions, His honour the end and aim of them. From Him He asked for power, and to Him ascribed the glory. In this case He raised His eyes to the heavens and to Him who made them, as a mark of His own trust in the Divine blessing on this work of kindness, as an intimation to the person to be cured, who could see, though he could not speak nor hear, that from thence was to come his aid, and as a warning to all the witnesses of the transaction that they should glorify the God of their fathers for His wondrous works. In this action observe the power and authority of Christ; He saith, “*Ephphatha*, that is, Be thou opened.” He speaks in the Syriac, the common language of the country, that the audience might all know what was passing. Assured of His power, He commands, and it is done. The authority of Heaven accompanying His words, sanctions the high claims of the Carpenter of Nazareth to the office and character of the Messiah.

V. The account of the miracle (ver. 35).—The miracle was accomplished “straightway,” instantly, on the command not gradually, as if it were the effect of external application. Although Christ, as the Messiah, “was not to cry nor lift up nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets” as a vain boaster or a deceiver of the people, yet He possessed within Him a mighty energy which gave its proper effect to every word which He spake, which made the deaf to hear His voice, and gave to the tongue of the dumb a power unknown and unconceived before. He spake with the voice of power; but as it broke on the delighted ear of the patient, it sounded soft as the voice of mercy speaking in its sweetest tones; gentle and kind, it diffused joy over his frame, mixed with

that astonishment which he could not help feeling when all the knowledge of manhood was at once bestowed on such a weak and imperfect being.

**VI. The charge of concealment** (ver. 36).—Without waiting to receive the expressions of astonishment, joy, and gratitude which were ready to break forth from every tongue, and which would have been so pleasant to an ordinary mind, He enjoins silence and secrecy with regard to this humane action. He laid the foundation for a complete proof of His Divinity, but He was not anxious to receive the direct testimony or honour of men. He formed the strongest claims to the gratitude of mankind, but He declined, with the genuine modesty of a superior mind, the applause which they were ready to bestow. It has been often observed, that true greatness is always adorned with this lovely quality, and that the highest attainments have ever been accompanied with humility. Possessing qualities far above those of humanity, the humility of Christ reflects a peculiar beauty on His character, and renders His virtues and His works most engaging and attractive. We are astonished at the Divine power in this miracle. We admire the Divine goodness and condescension. We adore and love the lowly spirit which shrank from the noisy praises of the wondering multitude, and avoided the ostentation of a public testimony to His merits.

**VII. The effect on the beholders** (vers. 36, 37).—In His journey through life Christ was much oftener harassed by envy and malice than consoled by the soft voice of sympathy or cheered by the sweet notes of praise. The people among whom He now was felt and spake of His good deeds as it became them. There is often a zeal without knowledge which appears in the writings of pious men. Hence these Galileans have been blamed because they published this miracle “so much the more” that the Worker of it charged them to conceal it. Christ, they say, was a Lawgiver entitled to the obedience of all whom He had addressed, and had peculiar reasons, involving His comfort and His safety, for wishing that this command should be carefully observed. All this is certainly true. But it was not yet known to these men of Galilee: they viewed Him merely as an illustrious prophet, whose modesty would keep secret what tended to His great honour, and, moved by wonder and gratitude, they feel themselves bound to proclaim the virtue which they admired, and the good deeds which they experienced. Far from entertaining any enmity to Christ, or a malicious disregard of His request, they are anxious to promote His credit among men, and use only the language of commendation.—*L. Adamson.*

**Ver. 34. Ephphatha.**—A serious and philosophical mind, contemplating the innumerable evils, physical and moral, to which men are exposed during their short continuance in this world, would very naturally conclude that the present state could not be that for which the Almighty originally intended them. Divine revelation alone can carry us back to the origin of things, and give us the true information with respect to their present appearances. By this we learn, that the beautiful order and harmony of creation were marred by the creature’s transgression, who, turning his will from the source of infinite goodness, lost that first state in which his Maker had placed him, and wherein all was light and joy, and found himself in subjection to an evil nature within and a world of darkness and distress without. By this too we are informed, that nothing less than a return to his original source could reinstate him in his original bliss; that this return could be rendered possible in no other way than by a ray, a spark, a seed, an earnest, a taste, or a touch of his first life, imparted or inspooken into his fallen nature by the God of love, to be gradually opened and unfolded by such a redeeming process as, with the co-operation of his own will, would effectually restore him to his primeval felicity; and that this was undertaken, and only could be undertaken and accomplished, by that Eternal Son of the

Father in and by whom man was originally created, and in and by whom alone he could be redeemed.

I. **The looking up to heaven** was beautifully expressive of the real situation in which this Great Restorer of human nature stood before His Heavenly Father. It was intended, no doubt, to communicate to every attentive observer this great lesson of instruction: that all the powers and virtues of which He was possessed came down from above; that they were communicated to Him "without measure"; and that He could have no authority over the evils of human life, so as either to mitigate or remove them, but by standing continually in the heavenly world, inspiring its air, receiving its beams of light and love, and sending them forth into every human heart that was truly desirous of receiving them; and that it was by such a communication alone that He should be enabled to restore hearing and speech to the unhappy patient they had brought before Him.

II. **This look was accompanied with a sigh.**—A sigh seems to indicate distress. An anxious, oppressed, and afflicted heart is sometimes so full as to deprive the tongue of the power of utterance; it vents itself, therefore, in a sigh. But what could oppress or afflict the heart of the meek and innocent Jesus? As the Second Adam, the Father and Regenerator of our whole lapsed race, He voluntarily assumed our nature, and became as intimately united to it as the head to the members of the body. His sympathetic heart is sensible of every want and distress of every son and daughter of Adam. He is persecuted with the Church that Saul persecuteth; and "whoso toucheth His children, toucheth the apple of His eye." Yea, He feels for those who feel not for themselves, and sighs over the sad estate of those who are blind to their true happiness—"who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness."

III. **"And He saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."**—Whatever salutary efficacy there may be in medicine, it must proceed from that heavenly virtue which rises from the reunion of divided properties. This reunion is the source of health, and the restoration of aught that may be impaired in any of our outward organs or inward faculties. To Him who had all nature under His control, who knew how to bring together and unite in an instant those properties which have been separated, a single word, the mere motion of His will, was sufficient to produce the desired effect.

IV. **The same supernatural powers which Jesus displayed upon this occasion He still continues to exercise in the hearts of His redeemed offspring.**—Deaf and dumb with respect to our inward and spiritual senses we all are by nature. We can hear and speak, indeed, of worldly things with a quickness and facility which manifests in innumerable instances the strong attraction by which they hold our attention and affections: the calls of business and of pleasure we are ever ready to answer. Our earthly senses are continually open; but our heavenly faculties are closed by a thousand obstructions which we suffer the devil, the world, and the flesh to form in our hearts. The Great Shepherd of Israel, who is perpetually employed in "seeking and saving that which was lost," makes use of a variety of means and methods to bring the soul to a conviction of its loss. The efficacy of these depends, indeed, upon the concurrence of the human will, because nothing can come into the soul but what itself wills or desires. The different dispensations of Providence are wisely and affectionately adapted to the different circumstances of individuals: the end and design of them all is one and the same, viz. to bring the wandering creature to a sense of his deviations, and "to guide his feet into the way of peace." By whatever means this conviction is wrought, the soul soon becomes sensible of its mistaken choice, and soon determines to withhold its attention from the calls of earthly



objects. In vain does the siren sing her delusive song—it ceases now to charm; for the finger of God stops the outward ear, that the inward ear may be opened to a sweeter note. The sigh of a contrite sinner brings down heaven into his heart. Jesus often sighed. He loves a sigh—it invites Him into His own temple; and “Ephphatha, Be opened,” is the blessed voice that precedes His salutary entrance. Be opened! Opened to what? To the harmony of heaven, to the symphonies of angels, to “the voice of the Bridegroom.” “The marriage of the Lamb” is come; the bride is prepared; the silver cord is tied; the blessed union is completed! The soul is now all eye, all ear, all heart, all tongue; and eye, and ear, and heart, and tongue are all employed in receiving the gifts and graces and celebrating the beauties and perfections of Him who is “fairest among ten thousand, who is altogether lovely.”—*J. Duchê, M.A.*

Ver. 37. “*He hath done all things well.*” —I. **The people’s testimony or verdict concerning our Saviour.** “He hath done all things well.” 1. No doubt but the scribes and Pharisees had been witnesses of Christ’s miracles as well as the people; but vainglory, envy, and other by-respects had jostled out the belief of them, so that by means of them they were rather hardened than converted. We owe the growth of Christian religion to plain, honest men, who received the gospel with free and unprejudiced affections, and closed with it when they saw it consonant to right reason. Oh, how blessed would this nation be if it had people of the like temper, who, without prejudice and prepossession, without siding and faction, would embrace sound doctrine, and bear testimony to it by their peaceable and holy lives! 2. From the persons testifying I proceed to the Person of whom they testify—He, a mere man, for so they express Him, and not as believers in after-times did, who never mentioned Him as mere man, but either as God or as the Eternal Son of God. However, this denomination of the people was at present accepted and registered as a proof of their ingenuity, that they gave Christ the glory of His actions, though their appellation of Him was not sufficiently honourable. God opens the eyes of men’s understanding and cures the infirmities of their souls by degrees. ’Twas enough, at our Lord’s first entrance upon His prophetic office and preaching to the world, that the people received His doctrine and conceived rightly of His miracles, though not of His Divine nature; that they acknowledged Him to be a good man, though not the Son of God Incarnate, which at that time was not understood by the apostles themselves. This their ignorance God then winked at; but how injurious, how derogatory to His honour would it now be so far to debase Him as to strip Him of His Divine nature and to degrade Him to mere humanity! ’Tis necessary to believe not only all that is delivered by Him, but also all that is delivered of Him, and to acknowledge Him to be our God as well as our Saviour. To say in these days, with the Jewish multitude, He, or this man, were no less than sacrilege, when our style ought to be, the Eternal Son, God blessed for evermore. 3. I pass to the third particular—the people’s verdict or approbation of Him, “He hath done well.” This testimony was rightly grounded: they concluded, with good reason, that He who had made “both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak” was no deceiver, but a man approved of God; that He whose works were so mighty must Himself be holy and His words true. Miracles, says St. Austin, have a tongue, and speak; they are not only works, but arguments. To give speech to a man that was from his birth without it is even of itself a kind of speech, the speech no less than of the Almighty; for God not appearing personally to converse with men, such as these are the expressions of Himself to the world. Neither did the voices which broke from the clouds at the baptism and transfiguration of our Lord, saying, “This is My Beloved Son,” more plainly and intelligibly declare to hearers who Christ was, than the voice

of God in every miracle that Christ wrought pronounced the same thing: on all His works were these Divine words engraved, in bright and shining characters, "This is My Beloved Son; hear Him." 4. I told you before that when the people gave Him this approbation, they did not understand Him to be that great prophet that was to come into the world, the Messiah, and Son of God; though a true prophet they apprehended Him to be, for this He had made apparent to the most scrupulous. But how then could they give Him so large a testimony as they did, when even true prophets sent by God did not do all things well, but had all of them their infirmities, and were not without sin? I confess, indeed, that, acknowledging Him no more than a man, their approbation of Him was not without exception; for though they pronounced a right sentence, 'twas not with a right knowledge; they overshot themselves in their testimony (though true) when they said, "He hath done all things well." This is no trifling or insignificant observation; for we may build on it this important truth, that we may not from a few instances of goodness conclude a universal probity, nor from a few specious or astonishing actions allow a Divine approbation: for thus a Theudas or a Judas Gaulonites may pass for the Messiah, and Simon Magus might pretend to the Godhead that was given him at Rome for his skill in magic; and the heathen demons, who were all deified for some uncommon and extraordinary performances, might challenge their deities.

II. **The application of this testimony to the present miracle.**—"He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." 1. He touched him with His fingers—(1) That the standers-by might see and testify that the cure came from Him, not from any confederacy with spirits, nor from any other external power; and this could not but oblige them to have a greater veneration both for His person and doctrine; it could not but persuade them that what proceeded from His mouth must needs be true, when they saw that the operations of His hands were supernatural and Divine. (2) That the miracle might make a deeper impression, and be longer remembered both by the beholders and by the person recovered. For the like reason our Saviour instituted the two great sacraments. He could have conveyed to us the pardon of our sins and the grace of His Holy Spirit without the ceremonies of washing and breaking of bread; but He thought fit to add these outward actions not only to make spiritual things more plain and conceivable, but to make transient things more permanent, that His benefits might be more remarkable and better fixed in our minds. 2. By casting up His eyes to heaven and sighing, He made intercession with God, from whom cometh salvation, in such strains as cannot be uttered or distinctly expressed; not that the Father did not hear Him readily and at all times, but that the people might see that the miracle which He wrought was the return of His prayer—that as His finger touched the tongue and ear of the man, so His request touched the throne of God. 3. The last circumstance which Christ used was the word "Ephphatha, Be opened"—a word like that which God spoke at creation (Gen. i. 3). The poets tell us of a famous enchantress whose spells were so prevalent that the celestial orbs yielded obedience to her. This was either a fiction or a juggle. But it is certain that all creatures, without any demur, speedily obeyed the commands of our Lord, without expecting a second fiat. —*E. Lake, D.D.*

OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 31. *Why did Christ now leave Tyre and Sidon and go again to Galilee?*

—1. Because He was called and appointed by God to be the minister of the circumcision. 2. That by His departure, depriving them of all further benefit of His presence and ministry, He might punish the unthankfulness of the people of those coasts, who apparently did not esteem and make use of His presence and ministry while He was with them.—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 34. *Christ's look, sigh, and word.*

—1. The upward look. Not so much an appeal as a testimony (John xi. 41, 42), indicating—(1) Devout faith in Heaven. (2) Conscious harmony with Heaven. (3) Undoubting confidence in Heaven. 2. The sigh. (1) Holy grief. (2) Brotherly sympathy. (3) Anxious solicitude. Says Henry: "He had better be tongue-tied still, unless he have grace to keep his mouth as with a bridle." 3. The word. (1) Love. (2) Power. (3) Prophetic meaning. Learn: 1. Adoring gratitude (Exod. iv. 1). 2. Humble patience. What use are we making of speech? (Jer. viii. 6; Isa. vi. 5). 3. Practical brotherly-kindness. Some *sigh*, but nothing more. Idle sentiment. Others *sigh*, but do not *look up*. No faith in God. If they pity and strive to help, it is only of themselves. They give not God the glory. Let us seek the Spirit of Christ.—*W. Forsyth.*

A *compassionate Saviour*.—1. See how great hardness of heart possesses us by nature in that we are not touched with feelings of our own sins and miseries, which caused Christ to grieve and sigh, etc. 2. Comfort to God's children in all miseries and afflictions. Christ is a merciful and compassionate Saviour. 3. Learn by Christ's example to be affected with grief and compassion for others' miseries.—*G. Petter.*

The *heavenward look*.—Let us be like our Lord, lifting up our eyes and "looking up to heaven"; sighing, too,

as He did, because of the many sadnesses of this world—its blindness, deafness, dumbness; but looking up to that heaven where none will be blind, but all shall see God—none deaf, but all shall hear His voice, and, hearing, understand—none dumb, but all shall praise God in the home of "hallelujah" for ever.—*Jas. Lonsdale.*

Ver. 35. *Ears opened before the tongue untied*.—It has been well observed that Christ first opened the man's ears, and then untied his tongue, because we must hear well before we can speak well.

Ver. 36. *Ostentation to be avoided by ministers*.—1. In doing good duties of our callings, we must be far from the very shew of ambition and vainglory. 2. Ministers must be very wise and careful to prevent all occasions and impediments that may any way hinder or interrupt them in their ministerial duties. 3. In that Christ forbade this miracle to be made known, because the time was not yet come in which the glory of His Godhead proved by His miracles should be clearly and fully manifested, hereby He teaches us to be far from desiring or seeking any honour or glory to ourselves which does not belong to us, or which does not as yet belong to us, or is not meet and fit for us at this or that time.—*G. Petter.*

Ver. 37. *God has done all things well*.—This is one of the most momentous principles of all wisdom and religion, one of the main pillars of human virtue and happiness—a principle essentially inherent in Christianity, and which should be always present to our thoughts, the soul and guide of all our judgments, dispositions, actions, hopes, and views. 1. "God has done all things well" is applicable to the arrangements and institutions which God has established in nature, to the laws which He has prescribed to the



innumerable host of His inanimate and animate creatures. All is one immense, close-compacted whole, the several parts whereof in various ways insinuate together, confine each other, advance, retard, impel, uphold, produce, enliven one another: a whole, where no power extrudes another, no part militates with another, no aim defeats another, no cause is disproportionate to its effect, no effect without cause; where is neither want nor superfluity, nor chasm; where nothing is indeterminate, nothing casual, nothing detached and separate from the rest; where absolute, exquisite connexion and order and harmony exist. 2. "God has done all things well" holds in regard to the arrangements and provisions which He has made in the moral world and for promoting moral ends. Is it expedient that thou, O man, from a sensual, animal creature, shouldst be formed and educated into a rational, wise, good, happy intelligent agent; is it expedient that thy faculties should be exerted, drawn forth, exercised, strengthened, perfected; is it expedient that thou shouldst act not from blind instinct, but by just perceptions and freely; is it expedient for thee to shun the deceitful paths of folly and vice, and pursue the career of virtue with courage and resolution; is it expedient for thee to know, to seek, to enjoy substantial, lasting happiness, and learn to look rather at the unseen than at the visible, at the future than at the present; is it expedient that thou shouldst prepare and fit thyself for a superior life,—then all these institutions and arrangements could be no other than they are; they are the properest means for promoting thy perfection and forwarding thee to thy appointment. 3. "God has done all things well" holds in regard to the particular laws which He has prescribed to us as moral creatures. They are all just and expedient, so many means and methods to perfection and happiness, how numerous soever the restraints they put upon us, however

hostile they are to our lusts and passions, whatever attention, care, self-denial, exertion of our faculties it may cost us, whenever they deprive us of some present advantage, some transient pleasure. Never without danger can we exceed the bounds which He has set us, never without detriment neglect the duties which He has enjoined us, never without injury omit the exercises which He has prescribed us. 4. "God has done and does all things well" is applicable to the providence and government which He extends over all. Let the ways of His providence seem ever so dark and intricate to us, before Him all is unclouded light, all perfect order. The association of means and ends may appear to us ever so incomprehensible, ever so incongruous; the coherence and combination of the whole and its parts ever so embarrassed: His ends will be infallibly attained, the means He employs are always the surest and best, and all evolve and disentangle themselves agreeably to the laws of sovereign perfection. 5. "God has done and does all things well" applies to all the dispensations which He is pleased to vouchsafe to each of us in particular. Riches and poverty, health and sickness, majesty and meanness, prosperity and adversity, thralldom and liberty, life and death, are equally in His hand, and are severally by Him distributed, ascertained, decreed, balanced, and combined together in such manner as may best consist with the greatest possible welfare of all living beings in general, and of each in particular. No one is postponed or preferred to another from partial or self-interested views; no one needs suffer on account of another, without being indemnified for it; no one will for ever forego or bear what at present by means of the combination of things he is obliged to forego or to bear; no one will fail of his appointment to happiness; but one sooner, another later, one in this, the other in another method will arrive at it. 6. "God has done and does all

things well" is applied by the worshipper of God to all the vicissitudes, accidents, events, little or great, that betide him, and thereby keeps his mind in continual serenity, even though in every other respect he is surrounded by darkness. He considers everything in its dependence on the will of the Sovereign Ruler of the world, and finds all that is agreeable to His will to be just and expedient. This idea gives a totally different

aspect to all that we see and hear and learn, sheds light and joy on all, preserves us from a thousand fallacies of sophistry and artifices of imposture along the dubious journey of life, enucleates and unravels to us many things both in the natural and the moral world, pacifies us concerning all that we cannot comprehend and explain, and is inexhaustible in power and consolation.—*G. J. Zollikofer.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 6, 7. *Externalism in religion.*—How many striking examples might be cited where men have united the form of godliness with the mystery of iniquity, under the manifest impression that their great zeal for religious observances atoned for their moral delinquencies, or that the latter were entirely overlooked on account of the approbation they earned by the former! We are told that Ivan the Terrible retired sometimes to a monastery which he had built, for his religious improvement. He rang the bell for matins himself at three o'clock in the morning. "During the services, which lasted many hours, he read, chanted, and prayed with such fervour that the marks of his prostrations remained on his forehead. But at intervals he went to the dungeons to see with his own eyes his prisoners tortured, and always returned, it was observed, with a face beaming with delight." What a mingling it was of diabolical cruelty with religious service! Christianity, in its corrupt branches, abounds in such absurdities. That is the way they became corrupt—by setting up a false standard of righteousness, by accepting zeal and fidelity in the observance of the forms of worship as a substitute for genuine piety.

*Lip-service.*—Panchcowrie, a Hindoo convert, thus spoke one day in the market: "Some think they will avert God's displeasure by frequently taking His name on their lips, and saying, 'O Excellent God!' 'O Ocean of Wisdom!' 'O Sea of Love!' and so on. To be sure, God is all this; but whoever heard of a debt being paid in words instead of rupees! God says to such people, 'Ye hypocrites, why do you honour Me with your lips when your heart is far from Me?'"

*Routine service.*—Go out with me into the woods, where the white oak is, and where the beech is. Their leaves died last November, but they all hang on the trees yet. The trees have not strength enough to slough them. They always make me think of a great many people. Sap does

not run in them any more, but their duties hang on them like dead leaves all over. They would not like to drop their duties—they are not quite in that state yet; but those duties are dry, sapless, and enforced.

Ver. 9. *God's commandments and human rules.*—The experience is a universal one, that God's commandments suffer from the competition of human rules. The great precepts of God have only an unseen God behind them, but behind the human rules there is generally a class whose pride is gratified by their observance and incensed by their neglect. Accordingly, whenever small rules of outward conduct begin to flourish, the great principles of religion—faith, love, honour—fall into the background. It is so to-day. The Thug in India who confessed to having killed three hundred and twenty people had no pangs of conscience for killing them, but was somewhat distressed on account of having killed a few of them after a hare had crossed his path or a bird whistled in a certain direction. Murder was no crime in his opinion, but the neglect of an omen from Bowany was a grave one. In Hindooism, which is ceremonial throughout, a man may be a most religious man, and yet very wicked. Many in our own country would unscrupulously commit great crimes, and yet be very careful to avoid eating flesh on Good Friday. It seems as if we only had a certain amount of power of attention in us, and, if it goes to little rules, there is none left for great principles.

*A hypocritical regard for ceremonial.*—A traveller in Russia tells the following of a lady who, leaving a party of companions in St. Petersburg, called a hack and directed the driver to take her home. Instead of following her directions, he drove her to a deserted part of the city, murdered her, and, taking her jewels, threw her body into the canal. As he returned to the city he was arrested. The murdered lady had with her a basket of pie; when asked why he did not

eat that, the murderer replied, "It was Lent. How could I think of eating that—it may contain meat; and I am, thank God, a good Christian." We sometimes express an abhorrence of insignificant things when our hearts are set on the vilest of sins.

Ver. 10. *Honouring parents*.—We call the Chinese heathen, and yet they have some customs that would do credit to a Christian people. On every New Year morning each man and boy, from the emperor to the lowest peasant, pays a visit to his mother. He carries her a present, varying in value according to his station, thanks her for all she has done for him, and asks a continuance of her favour another year. They are taught to believe that mothers have an influence for good over their sons all through life.

Ver. 15. *A self-evident truth*.—Christ does not stop to prove that these things come out of the heart. He asserts it, and asserts it because it is self-evident. When you see a thing coming forth, you are clear it was there first. One summer I noticed hornets continually flying from a number of decayed logs in my garden. I saw them constantly flying in and out, and I did not think myself at all unreasonable in concluding that there was a hornets' nest there. And so, if we see the hornets of sin flying out of a man, we suppose at once there is sin within him.

Ver. 20. *Concupiscence*.—A gentleman was once extolling loudly the virtue of honesty, saying what a dignity it imparted to our nature, and how it recommended us to the favour of God. "Sir," replied his friend, "however excellent the virtue of honesty may be, I fear there are very few men in the world who really possess it." "You surprise me," said a stranger. "Ignorant as I am of your character," was the reply, "I fancy it would be no difficult matter to prove even you to be a dishonest man." "I defy you." "Will you give me leave, then, to ask you a question or two, and promise not to be offended?" "Certainly." "Have you never met with an opportunity of getting gains by unfair means? I don't say, Have you taken advantage of it? but, Have you ever met with such an opportunity? I, for my part, have; and I believe everybody else has." "Very probably I may." "How did you feel your mind affected on such an occasion? Had you no secret desire, not the least inclination, to seize the advantage which offered? Tell me without any evasion, and consistently with the character you admire." "I must acknowledge I have not always been absolutely free from every irregular inclination; but—" "Hold! sir, none of your salvos; you have confessed enough. If you had the desire, though you never proceeded to the act, you were dis-

honest in heart. This is what the Scriptures call concupiscence. It defiles the soul; it is a breach of that law which requireth truth in the inward parts, and, unless you are pardoned through the blood of Christ, it will be a just ground for your condemnation, when God shall judge the secrets of men."

Ver. 21. *Origin of sin*.—When a young man consulted John Newton touching the origin of evil, the divine replied that he was more anxious to get sin out of the world than to know how it came into the world. But really this saying is not so wise as it seems, for to know where sin takes its rise is of first consequence in attempting its extirpation. In the soul Christ declared that it took its origin, and in the soul Christ sought to deal with it, supplying a spiritual antidote for a spiritual plague.

*Sin has its source in the heart*.—At present there are two theories in the field to explain the origin of contagious diseases—the parasitic theory, and the theory of the innate character of diseases. The parasitic theory assumes that diseases are originated by microbes first diffused in the atmosphere, and then taken into the system by the air we breathe, the water we drink, the things we touch. The advocates of the innate character of diseases hold, on the contrary, that the disease is spontaneously developed in the patient; the first cause is in morbid changes which are purely chemical, changes produced in the actual substance of the tissues and secretions without any external intervention of microbes—the microbes, where they really exist, being only a secondary phenomenon, a complication, and not the scientific cause which actually determines the disease. Now, whatever may be the exact truth in this biological controversy, it is evident that the first cause of such disease must be sought in a defect of life, a feebleness, a certain untoward disposition and receptivity in the organism itself. The phylloxera devastates the French vineyards because the vines have been exhausted by excessive cultivation; tuberculosis fastens upon man because of obscure conditions of bodily weakness and susceptibility; vigorous plants and robust constitutions defying the foreign destructive bodies which may fill the air—extrinsic influence and excitement counting for little where the intrinsic tendency does not exist. Revelation assumes that the man morally occupies much the same position. Environment brings the opportunity for evil, the solicitation or provocation to evil, so far do evil communications corrupt good manners; but the first cause of all must be found in the heart itself, in its lack of right direction, sympathy, and force; in a word, the scientific cause of sin is the spiritual cause.



*Evil thoughts.*—A quaint preacher says, "Beware how ye tarry in the painting-chamber of the devil," by which he warns the young Christian to be on his watch against the way in which Satan seduces the imagination. When evil thoughts and unholy desires intrude into the soul, it is like a fiery dart finding its way into a powder magazine. The only safety is to stamp it out at once. If we let the spark of fire smoulder on, soon all will be wrapped in flames.

*The commencements of evil to be rejected.*—It is true that no man can determine who shall knock at his door, but every man can determine who shall come in through his door. It is true that no man can say, "I will not have wrong thoughts"; such thoughts will come into a man's mind without his permission; but it is within the power of every man to say whether or not he will entertain them. If, however, a man entertains evil thoughts, he cannot tell whether the conflagration will or will not spread. A man sits down upon a prairie upon an autumnal day, when everything is dry and parched, and sets fire to the leaves and grass, saying, "I will stamp it out; I merely want a little blaze here for my own use"; but when he attempts to stamp it out, the fire is quicker-footed than he. Though he rushes from side to side and does the best he can to extinguish it, it is not stamped out, but gains on him right and left, and by-and-by it opens its wings and flies all over the prairie, destroying insects, and beasts, and human beings, and property of every kind, travelling like a whirlwind.

*Bias of the heart.*—The bowl runs as the bias inclines it; the ship moves as the rudder steers it; and the mind thinks according to the predominancy of vice or virtue in it. The heart of man is like the spring of the clock, which causes the wheels to move right or wrong, well or ill. If the heart once set forward for God, all the members will follow after; all the parts, like dutiful handmaids, in their places, will wait on their mistress. The heart is the great workhouse where all sin is wrought before it is exposed to open view. It is the mint where evil thoughts are coined, before they are current in our words or actions. It is the forge where all our evil works as well as words are hammered out. There is no sin but is dressed in the withdrawing-room of the heart, before it appears on the stage of life. It is vain to go about a holy life till the heart be made holy. The pulse of the hand beats well or ill, according to the state of the heart. If the chinks of the ship are unstopped, it will be to no purpose to labour at the pump. When the water is foul at the bottom, no wonder that scum and filth appear at the top. There is no way to stop the issue of sin but by drying up the matter that feeds it.—*G. Swinnock.*

*A bad heart.*—A certain little boy in Kansas, only eleven years old, strove hard to be a Christian. Once he stood watching his sister paring the potatoes for dinner. Soon she pared an extra large one, which was very white and very nice on the outside, but when cut into pieces it shewed itself to be hollow and black inside with dry-rot. Instantly Willie exclaimed, "Why, Maggie, that potato isn't a Christian!" "What do you mean?" asked Maggie. "Don't you see it has a bad heart?" was the child's reply. This little Kansas boy had learned enough of the religion of Jesus to know that, however fair the outside may be, the natural heart is corrupt.

Ver. 22. *Beware of covetousness*, for, under the guise of being a mere harmless indulgence of natural feeling, it is really the imbibing a dangerous gas, which will eventually choke our spiritual life. Whilst we revel in the chambers of our covetous imagery, and paint the fond desires of our evil hearts in every detail, we accustom ourselves to the growth of sinful longings, we construct an easy gradient, down which we may pass from unholy wishes to wicked deeds. The serpent's egg may become the venomous reptile.—*Dr. Hardman.*

*Covetous men* are condemned to dig in the mines for they know not whom. The spirit of covetousness, which leads to an overvalue and overlove of money, is independent of amount. A poor man may make an idol of his little, just as much as the rich man makes an idol of his much. The Duke of Marlborough, when he was in the last stage of life and very infirm, would walk from the public room, in Bath, to his lodgings on a cold, dark night to save a sixpence in chair hire. At his death he left more than a million and a half sterling, which was inherited by one of his greatest enemies.

*Avarice.*—It was a true instinct which led Dante to picture avarice as an invincible foe. In his pilgrimage he passed safely by the leopard of pleasure; he feared, yet was not vanquished by, the lion of ambition; but the lean wolf of avarice drove him step by step back to the darkness. Such is the power of covetousness. It is a vice which renews its strength and is tenacious and remorseless.

*Evil eye.*—There are evidences of the prevalence in Ceylon of that most ancient of all superstitions, the belief in the "evil eye," which exists in all countries in the universe from China to Peru. Is there any mysterious connexion between the prohibition to "covet" contained in the Decalogue and the horror of the "evil eye" so often alluded to in the Bible?—*Sir J. E. Tennant.*

Ver. 24. *Tyre and Sidon*.—Toward the

north, where the cliffs of Lebanon rise bolder and loftier, and crowd closer down upon the sea, is the narrow strip of sea-coast memorable in history as the earliest home of maritime commerce, and of the splendid wealth that resulted from it, as well as of the luxury and corruption, the disasters and overthrows, that followed in their turn—the land of Tyre and Sidon, otherwise called *Phœnicia*. Fifteen hundred years before Christ, Tyre was a great and famous town—mentioned in the book of Joshua—and Sidon, a day's walk to the north of it, was older yet. Six hundred years before Christ, following hard after the prophecies of Ezekiel to fulfil them, Nebuchadnezzar the Great came marching down the coast with his Chaldeans, and destroyed it after a siege of thirteen years' duration. It would not stay destroyed. That little rocky island lying off the cliffs of the inhospitable coast has been one of the points of earth predestinated for the abode of man. Three hundred years before Christ, Alexander the Great, marching his Macedonian phalanxes down this narrow coast-line, found Tyre lying across his path to India. On its island of rock it seemed to defy him, until, after seven months of vain siege, he gathered up the ruins of the former city that cumbered the shore and tumbled them into the sea, and over that isthmus marched over and took the town and destroyed it again. Since that, to this day, Tyre is a peninsula, and no more an island. But now, in the days of Christ, the city was growing up a third time. And the relics of its splendour at the period in question are visible to the traveller to-day. You see the traces of that magnificent enterprise that marked the palmy days of the Roman Empire. They sent to Egypt for the numberless granite columns that decorated the quays and breakwaters—you can see them now lying in piles under the blue, tideless Mediterranean waters. They sent to the Grecian islands for sculptured marbles. They decorated the neighbouring hillsides with the villas of Greek and Roman merchants, with statues and fountains and tessellated pavements. And not least, "on every high hill and under every green tree" they set up again the shrines and temples of that utterly corrupt and licentious idolatry that had polluted not only this Canaanitish race itself from the beginning, but all the races that came into relation with it. The glory of Tyre is departed now. The hovels of poor fishermen occupy the sites of palaces and temples, and the munitions of her rocks are a place for the drying of nets.—*L. W. Bacon.*

Ver. 26. *A rich heritage.*—There is no heritage so rich as the heritage of a mother's pious example and godly counsels—no

patrimony so valuable and profitable as a mother's prayers. Upon a tombstone erected by a family of children was the inscription, "Our mother. She always made home happy." Cecil, though once full of sceptical notions, said afterwards, "There was one argument I *never* could get over—the influence and life of a godly mother." Oh, mothers, take your daughters to Jesus, and be determined to plead and persevere until He shall speak the healing word and cause them to sit at His feet, "clothed and in their right mind"!

Vers. 27, 28. *"Feed me as a dog."*—The Talmud contains a story so singularly parallel to this that it is worth reproducing. "There was a famine in the land, and stores of corn were placed under the care of Rabbi Jehudah the Holy, to be distributed to those only who were skilled in the knowledge of the law. And, behold, a man came, Jonathan, the son of Amram, and clamorously asked for his portion. The Rabbi asked him whether he knew the condition and had fulfilled it, and then the suppliant changed his tone and said, 'Nay, but feed me as a dog is fed, who eats of the crumbs of the feast'; and the Rabbi hearkened to his words, and gave him of the corn."

*The gospel for the outcast.*—Duff, the missionary, was about to begin service in a Boer farmer's house, when he noticed that none of the Kaffir servants were present. To his request that they should be brought in, the Boer replied roughly, "What have Kaffirs to do with the gospel? Kaffirs, sir, are dogs." Duff made no reply, but opened his Bible and read, "Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." "Stop," cried the farmer, "you've broken my head. Let the Kaffirs come in."

Ver. 32. *Incapacity removed in heaven.*—At a deaf-and-dumb institution for children a boy was once dying, and, when his teacher signified to him that there was no hope of recovery, his face lighted up, and in his own language he said, "Oh, sir, I shall soon be singing God's praises, and won't you be surprised and delighted to hear me when you come?" The boy had so grieved over his incapacity for thus honouring God on earth, that the prospect of death was one of unqualified joy, as setting him free to use the best member that he had in the glorification of God.

Ver. 33. *"Aside from the multitude."*—There is too much noise around us, and we cannot hear the voice of God as long as all is well with us and we have the enjoyment of life. Every affliction is a wilderness in which a man is in solitude and stillness, so that he understands better the Word of God.

When human voices are silent, the voice of God begins to speak.—*Dr. Tholuck.*

Ver. 34. *Christ saddened by the sight of human misery.*—How it must have saddened the heart of Jesus to walk through this world and see so much human misery! There is a story of a sculptor who wept as he saw at his feet the shattered fragments of his breathing marble, on which he had spent years of patient, loving toil. Jesus walked through this world amid the ruin of the noblest work of His own hands. Everywhere He saw the destruction wrought by sin. So His grief was twofold—tender sympathy with human suffering, and sorrow over the ruinous work of sin.

*Ephphatha.*—The Ephphatha of Christ is heard also in history. He sighed “Ephphatha,” and the conflict of His Church was revealed to His Evangelist. He sighed “Ephphatha,” and the tongue of Galileo and Kepler told of the wondrous order of the heavens. He sighed “Ephphatha,” and buried monuments gave up their records of the past, and threw sidelights on higher truths. He spoke “Ephphatha,” and Caxton gave new powers to the world; knowledge stepped forth from her dust-covered shrine, and carried her rich bounties into every city and house; history unlocked her long-hidden lore; science painted in noble colours the half-veiled face of nature; the tongue of Europe was loosed. But well might a sigh have been heaved as the Ephphatha was spoken. It is not truth alone, or holiness alone, which has been unlocked. It is not Chaucer’s “well of English undefiled,” the pure song of Spenser, the heart-rousing vision of Dante, the chivalrous epic of Tasso, the stately and magnanimous verse of Milton, alone which have been given to the world. A fouler current mingles with the pure, bright stream, and darkens the flood of knowledge—the

unredeemed filth of Boccaccio, the unbridled licentiousness of Scarron, the stupid sensuality of Dancourt, the open indecency of Wycherley, the more fatal suggestiveness of Sterne. The press became indeed the voice of nations; but when it was loosed a sigh drawn from the pure heart of Christ, wounded by the misuse of a glorious opportunity, might have been heard by the Church of God. Yet Christ did not withhold the boon. Freely, ungrudgingly, were His miracles of love performed. To deny powers or privileges, or the free exercise of rights and faculties, on the ground that they may be abused, is to act according to the dictates of expediency, not of right. But there is a remedy for the evils which accompany this freedom. It is by conferring an additional and guiding gift. There is another “Ephphatha.” He speaks, “Be opened,” and the tongue is loosed; but the ear is unstopped also. While He bestows the faculty of speech, He bestows also the opportunity of hearing those glad and soul-elevating principles of righteousness and forgiveness and love which will fill the loosened tongue with joy and put a new song of praise in that long-silent mouth.—*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*

Ver. 35. *Tongue loosed.*—Dr. Carey found a man in Calcutta who had not spoken a loud word for four years, under a vow of perpetual silence. Nothing could open his mouth, till happening to meet with a religious tract, he read it, and his tongue was loosed. He soon threw away his *paras* and other badges of superstition, and became a partaker of the grace of God. Many a professing Christian, who is as dumb in religious subjects as if under a vow of silence, would find a tongue to speak if religion were really to touch and warm his heart.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **The multitude being very great.** The MS. authority is pretty evenly divided between *παμπόλλου* as above, and *πάλιν πόλλου*, *there being again a great multitude*. The latter seems preferable on the whole, *παμπόλλου* being found nowhere else in the New Testament, nor yet in LXX.

Ver. 3. **For divers, etc.**—*And some of them are (or, are come) from afar.* Our Lord’s words: not an addition by the Evangelist.

Ver. 8. **Broken meat.**—*Fragments*, as in chap. vi. 43. **Baskets.**—Not the little wicker-baskets of chap. vi. 43, but *panniers* of sufficient size and strength to hold a man (Acts ix. 25).

Ver. 9. We may note the following points of difference between this feeding and the former (chap. vi. 35-44). 1. On this occasion the people had been with our Lord upwards



of three days, a circumstance not mentioned before. 2. Seven loaves are now distributed and a few fishes; then, five loaves and two fishes. 3. Five thousand were fed then; four thousand now. 4. Seven large rope-baskets are employed here to hold the fragments; twelve small wicker-baskets there. 5. The more excitable inhabitants of the coast-villages of the north would have taken and made Him a king (John vi. 15); whereas the men of Decapolis and the eastern shores permit Him to depart without any demonstration.

Ver. 10. **Dalmanutha**.—"Has been identified with the modern *Ain-el-Bārīdeh*, the 'cold fountain,' a glen which opens upon the lake about a mile from Magdala." Cp. Matt. xv. 39.

Ver. 17. **Hardened**.—*Dulled*. See on chaps. iii. 5, vi. 52.

Ver. 22-26. Peculiar to Mark. **Bethsaida** (= *Fish-town*).—There were two places of this name: (1) the landing-port for Capernaum, on the western side of the lake; (2) a village to the north-east, on which Herod Philip conferred the status of a city, naming it *Julias*, after the emperor's daughter. That this latter was the Bethsaida to which our Lord now withdrew may be inferred from the indications of locality in vers. 10, 13, 27.

Ver. 24. See R.V. "I see something confusedly and obscurely; for I see what I think must be men, and yet so dimly that they look to me like trees, only that I know that men move from their places, whereas trees do not."

Vers. 25, 26. See R.V. for readings and renderings.

Ver. 27. **Cæsarea Philippi**.—This picturesquely situated town, originally called Paneas, after a cavern dedicated to Pan in its neighbourhood, was enlarged and fortified by Herod Philip, who also renamed it in honour of the emperor. Then, to distinguish it from the Cæsarea on the Mediterranean coast—the seat of the Roman government, where Cornelius lived and Paul suffered imprisonment—it was styled "*Cæsarea Philippi*." The name was again changed to *Neronias* by Agrippa II., as a compliment to his imperial patron; but the original appellation still survives in the modern *Banias*.

Ver. 31. **After three days**.—Only another form for "on the third day"—one complete day, with a portion of another day (no matter how small a portion) on either side. Cf. Gen. xlii. 17, 18, LXX.; also Matt. xxvii. 63, 64.

Ver. 32. **Openly**.—*Explicitly*, and not by dark hints as heretofore (John ii. 19, iii. 14; Mark ii. 20; John vi. 51).

Ver. 34. **Whosoever will come**.—*If any one wishes to come*.

Ver. 35. **Will save**.—*May wish to save*.

Vers. 36, 37. **Soul**.—*Life*: same word as in ver. 35.

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—9.

(PARALLEL: MATT. XV. 32-39.)

*The feeding of the four thousand*.—It could hardly have been without some special reason that the miracle should have been also worked on another occasion by our Lord with scarcely any variation of detail, or that in each case the miracle should have been recorded with so very great attention to detail.

I. **The compassion of Jesus Christ is the origin and source of help**.—1. He had compassion on mankind as, looking down from heaven, He saw the whole human race, a vast multitude of souls, helpless, in the wilderness of sin, starving, away from all supplies of spiritual food, with death before them; and having compassion on them, He came from heaven to earth to bring them the bread of life. 2. He sees the multitude to-day, and has compassion on us; and so He sends to us His Church, by and through the ministry of which He gives us all the means of grace. 3. And remember this, that Jesus our Lord, looking upon the multitude now as of old, looks at us not in the mass, but one by one. He sees *me*; He knows *my* needs; He has compassion on *me*.

II. **Our Lord draws out from the disciples a declaration of their own inability to meet the difficulty and to supply the needs of the multitude**.—And it was then, when they had realised the difficulty, when they had come to see their own insufficiency, that our Lord worked the miracle. And is it not just so with us and the difficulties of life? "Whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" The question is a natural one. It is also an admission of entire helplessness, and it is often the first step to obtaining help.

III. **He makes them see that, after all, they have something through which help is to be obtained, and that they must do what they can.** That "God helps those who help themselves" is a saying which is true in material as in spiritual matters; and we very often forget that God helps us through those very things which we already possess, and which we overlook as insufficient for our needs. The world around seems hard and cold; there seems no chance of help. It is well at such times to put to ourselves the question, "How many loaves have ye?" Then, if we think, we find that, after all, we have something

life, health, strength, intelligence, opportunities of one kind or another; and these gifts of God already given to us, if used diligently according to His laws, will, under His blessing, prove more than sufficient for our need. So, also, in spiritual matters. There are times when the temptations and the trials of life, when old habits of evil, the downward tendencies so often yielded to, seem altogether too great for us to overcome—and they are too great for us to overcome in our own strength; and though we would thankfully overcome if we could, yet it all seems so hopeless; we so fully realise our own weakness that we are tempted to give it all up as hopeless. Ah! then listen to the Saviour's searching question, "How many loaves have ye?" "Have you nothing already given you that may help? No strength? No grace? Look well and see." 1. The gift of baptismal grace—and therein the germ of all graces. 2. The sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, given you in confirmation—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and strength, knowledge and true godliness and holy fear. 3. The Holy Communion. 4. All the means of grace. The Word of God. Opportunities of public worship. 5. The power of repentance. 6. The gift of prayer. 7. The ministry of the Church. If we will but use these gifts faithfully, then by God's blessing they will more than suffice for all the wants of our souls, and we shall be "more than conquerors" in that battle that seemed so hopeless.

IV. **His was the power that was to make this small amount of food more than enough to satisfy the needs of this vast multitude:** but before He exercised that power **He commanded them to sit down.** There is here a lesson of the utmost value to us all in this busy, energetic age. We need more repose of mind and character, more quiet, steady, humble work of all kinds. Jesus commands us, as He did the multitude of old, to "sit down on the ground," if we would receive His gifts aright and benefit by them. They are to be received in an orderly, quiet, composed, and humble spirit. The life most free from feverish excitement is the life that profits most by His gifts. In the spiritual life, above all, there must be not only energetic activity, but also the quiet sitting down and waiting humbly for God's blessing. "Sit down" before you say your prayers, if you would really have them answered. Recall your thoughts, be patient and quiet and humble, try to remember to whom you are about to speak, and what it is you are going to ask, what you really need. "Sit down" before your acts of public worship. Let there be more restfulness about your worship, more repose of thought, more concentration of thought on what you are about to do. "Sit down," above all, before each Communion. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." 1. Let me calmly, honestly, and thoughtfully look into my past life, especially since my last Communion. 2. Let me see where I am and what I am. 3. Let me try my best to see my sins as they really are, and as they are recorded in God's Book. 4. Let me "sit down" and truly repent of past sins, and make my humble confession to Almighty God, honestly purposing amendment of life.

V. **God's gifts, whether temporal or spiritual, are never to be wasted.**—He gives, indeed, with a splendid liberality, but He gives that His gifts may be

used and not wasted. "Waste not, want not," applies to the matters of the soul quite as truly as it does to those of the body. Gather up, then, the fragments of time that may yet remain to you, and make the most of them, living daily nearer God. Gather up the fragments of the opportunities of showing sympathy and kindness and winning the hearts of others. Gather up the fragments that yet remain to you of all the opportunities of helping others by precept or example or moral support. Gather up all the fragments of the grace given you. Store it up for use; by use it grows and increases; by use grace is turned into virtue.—*Dean W. C. Ingram.*

*Christ's presence in ordinances.*—If we are following Christ, we may not doubt His protection; we may not think (however dark our prospect) that His support and comfort will be withdrawn; but, on the contrary, we shall find that means are at hand (though overlooked for a time) which, with His blessing, will suffice for our wants. If we are following in the flock of Christ, and do not, by our sin or our distrust, forfeit our privilege, we shall find indeed that "the Lord is our Shepherd, and therefore we can lack nothing"; and we have His assurance that He will be with us, to support, protect, and save, even unto the end of the world.

**I. There is much in the Church at the present day which resembles the position of those who upon this occasion followed our Lord into the wilderness.**—

1. First, inwardly, in the thoughts and feelings of their minds, there is the same strong tendency in the present generation of Christians to walk by sight, not by faith. They see themselves surrounded by sin on every side, and they fail to discern the presence of Christ among them. They are following Christ, it is true; they are hearing His Word in public and at home; they are hungering for the bread of life; yet when they think of the position of Christ's Church on earth they are ready to ask, "Whence can a man," etc. The answer to this is ready. The bread is within our reach, if we will take our eyes off from man and fix them upon God; if we regard the Church as the institution not of man but of God, if we avail ourselves of her sacraments and other ordinances in faith, "all," "men, women, and children," "will be filled," and there will be more than enough. 2. Yet men in general do not receive the blessing; they are starving for the bread of life, and cannot find it. Why? Because they have no faith in the ordinance which is to convey it. If they fail to discern the presence of Christ in any ordinance of the Church, no blessing can reasonably be expected. Thus in respect to public prayer our Lord has promised, "Where two or three are gathered together," etc. Is it reasonable to suppose that a person who, after such plain declarations, fails to discern Christ's presence in the worship of the Church should receive a blessing from it? Again, with regard to the Holy Communion, the necessity is admitted of "feeding upon Christ" and eating "the bread of life." But do men seek this food when it is to be had in the Blessed Sacrament? And do they believe that it is Christ on whom they feed? So again, if after our Lord's plain words, "Suffer little children to come to Me, and forbid them not," we neglect to bring them to that sacrament by which they are made members of Christ's Church, can we wonder if they are not blessed? or if, notwithstanding His plain declaration, "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved," we yet consider that the child is not "by baptism regenerate," and thus in state of salvation,—if we prefer thus to "walk by sight, and not by faith," can we wonder if we suffer? Again, if after the express assertion of St. Peter, "Baptism doth now save us—not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a *good conscience* towards God," no care is taken to train up those who have been baptised in the paths of righteousness; if we fail to discharge the obligation which it entailed upon



us, to bring up those children as no longer our own, but Christ's, bought with His own blood and resigned to Him, only that they are lent us back for a time; if we fail to discern the presence of Christ as it were leading His youthful converts by the hand, and on the contrary distract their attention or suffer them to wander away from Him,—can we be surprised that they should run into grievous sin, and that the Word of God should seem to fail?

**II. What is the course which all Christians whose eyes are open to their position ought to pursue?** 1. How was it of old? See Ps. cvii. 4-6. Now, as then, if we pray "in the faith, we shall receive"; if we trustfully "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," if we believe that "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him," our faith will be confirmed, our grace increased, and a new light will break in upon us. We shall see that, however dark the prospect, however seemingly impossible that good should come from it, yet to doubt is sinful; Christ will ever be true to His own ordinance. 2. The Christian who has been tried will admit that the cares and sorrows of life (the very rocks and thorns of his wilderness) are productive of good: losses and poverty will keep his soul humble, dead to the world, sober; so will mean or low station; reproach will exercise his patience; pain and bodily affliction, though for the present not joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." 3. Every Christian will admit that he has at times received support and consolation from the prayers and the advice of his brethren in the Lord. The conversation of the pious, their consolation in time of trouble, their advice and support in cases of difficulty, and their piety and earnestness at other times, are admitted to afford a degree of peace and happiness; they are admitted to be channels through which God is sending us support, and we feel the good they have done us, and are thankful for it.

**III. The consequence of our failing to recognise Christ's presence in His ordinances is very apparent.** -1. We perceive it in the want of reverence too often manifested in the house of God, or in unfrequent attendance there—in the listless prayer, the faint praise, the wandering thought, the neglected Communion, or the carelessness with which the altar is approached. 2. We perceive it in the neglected training of Christian children, who are seldom regarded as regenerate—as the lambs of Christ's flock, led by Him and blessed by Him, unless through our indifference Satan is permitted to obtain the advantage over them. 3. We perceive it in the evil life of youths who, though children of godly parents, through the error of those parents in not regarding the Church's ordinances as the means of grace, have become mere hypocrites in religion, and oftentimes are bringing down their parents' grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. 4. We perceive it in the neglect of confirmation, or the careless receiving of that holy rite. 5. We perceive it in unhappy marriages, or the breach of the marriage vow. 6. We perceive it in the relapse into sin of those who, when they had thought themselves dying, made to the priest the most earnest professions of repentance.—*C. C. Spencer.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

**Ver. 2. *Waiting on Christ.***—1. If we have real spiritual hunger, we shall not soon weary of waiting on Christ. 2. Christ will take good care of those who are earnestly following Him.

3. Christ watches just as lovingly over our physical needs as over the welfare of the soul.

*Christ's compassion.*—How confidently, then, may the believer reckon

upon the compassion of his Lord! How should the knowledge of it lead him to cast all his care upon Him. In every circumstance of his life Jesus feels for him, and is watching over him, and is ordering all things for his good. Only let *faith* be in active exercise, and realise this truth. Distrust will only cause us to err.—*H. Caddell.*

Ver. 3. *Christ's knowledge of human nature.*—Why did these people not faint *now*? Simply because there was something to absorb their thoughts now, and thus make them forgetful of their hunger. We have travelled before now with a companion, and have been charmed by his personality and utterances. We became almost unconscious of time or space. Then the hour came when we had to say "Good-bye," and to walk home without the inspiration of his presence. Oh, how weak and wearied we then felt! Everything told us that we had exhausted our body under the continuous strain. But we did not realise all that while our friend was near. Now Christ, who knows our nature, knew all this. Oh, we rejoice to know that Jesus enters into these little details of human experience, that His pity covers all possibilities of failure arising from the weakness of our flesh or aught else!—*D. Davies.*

Ver. 4. *Forgetfulness of former mercies.*—Do we act more consistently even now, with all our increase of light and of spiritual experience? Is it not too often true of us, even now, that, though we have heard with our ears and have ourselves witnessed the noble and merciful works which God has done, we still cry with only a faltering faith, "Oh, Lord, arise, help us and deliver us"? It is so with regard to His providential dealings; it is so with regard to His gifts of grace. Each new difficulty appears too great for us; at each recurring necessity we feel as if we should be overpowered by Satan and by the many perplexities which surround us. We all have need to

pray for that ripeness of faith and that clearness of spiritual discernment which would enable us under sudden dangers to rely undoubtingly upon Him who has so often saved us, and in the midst of temptations to rest with confidence upon that Divine grace the power of which has so often been displayed to ourselves and others, and which never faileth those who trust to it.

Vers. 6, 7. *The law of increase.*—It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Deut. viii. 3). The true bread is Christ, who was given to us at baptism, that He might live in us and bring forth fruit. On this grace we depend for all good. Would we have Him to increase, we must note and imitate His action in this miracle. 1. *He had faith* in His own Divine power. So have we in grace. Did we look at difficulties, our hearts would fail. We must look only to Him; believe that He has called us; believe that He gives us power to obey. 2. *He used ordinary means*: so we; no special calls needed; in the midst of daily life we may become perfect. For example, there are duty, temptations, sacrifices, trials. 3. *He gave thanks*: so let us even for small mercies; we must not let blessings ravel out. 4. *Liberality toward others.* Grace is meant to be used. If its fire has really kindled in our hearts, we must diffuse the warmth. But the very act of imparting blessing brings an increase to ourselves (Prov. xi. 25; Job xlii. 10).—*A. G. Jackson.*

*No waste in God's work.*—When God interrupts the ordinary course of His providence, it is not for the purpose of surprising and astounding men's minds, but in order to bring about His own designs. Hence it is that we never see any waste either of energy or material in His works. And thus does He proceed in supplying the wants of His people. He does it so as to make it plainly appear that the supply is *God's work*, and yet not so as to be altogether out of the course of natural things.—*H. Caddell.*

*Our wants Christ's care.*—Jesus created a supply out of what the disciples had, and not out of nothing. In like manner, if His people daily follow Him in faith, if this is the first and prominent object of their lives, and if, in subordination to this, they are diligent and laborious in their callings in life, and seek His blessing on all their earnings, He will take care that they never want. His hand, though unseen, except by the eye of faith, shall break and bless their daily meal. They shall ever have enough. And the secret of it will be that "Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith" presides also over all their *temporal* concerns, makes *their wants His care*, becomes a daily guest at their table, and draws out to the extent of their wants the slender meal which, by His blessing, their faithful diligence has already provided.—*Ibid.*

*Christ will not fail us in the hour of need.*—If we follow the Lord into the

wilderness, if for His sake we are content to give up much which the world holds valuable, to forego some of its lawful pleasures, if in His service we forget to make provision for the flesh, He will not fail us in our hour of necessity, but will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory, feed our souls with the hidden manna of His sweetness, and give us such temporal blessings as may best minister to our eternal good.—*S. W. Skeffington.*

Ver. 8. *Religious frugality.*—There is a wide difference between a penurious spirit and a spirit of religious frugality. The former grudges what is used in order that it may hoard up the more for itself. The latter unites a large hospitality with a due sense of responsibility to God in the use of His bountiful gifts. The former is mere covetousness; the latter is wise and godly prudence.—*H. Caddell.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10—12.

(PARALLEL: MATT. xvi. 1-4.)

*The "sign" refused.*—It was, we may be sure, no mere intellectual deficiency in His hearers which drew this sigh from the Gracious Saviour. In the request that He would give them a sign there was some secret spiritual wrongness over which Christ grieved.

1. **What did they mean by asking a sign?** Had they not His wonderful works? And why did He say that no sign should be given when in fact He was giving signs innumerable and conclusive? It is quite plain that Christ's works did not convince them. It is therefore also plain that we greatly overrate the force of miracles as an evidence of Christianity. In those times few, if any, followed Christ because of the miracles. They followed Him because of that all-prevailing power which accompanied the simple words "Follow Me," because never man spake as He spake, because the message of Divine love carried with it its own overwhelming evidence. And then we know that vast multitudes witnessed the miracles and yet persistently refused to believe. Some other sign they wanted, something besides curing the blind and cleansing the leper and raising the dead. They asked for some imposing display in the heavens, some disclosure of the Messiah magnificently seated on a material throne, which would confound, amaze, and convince all beholders. Now *that* the Saviour would not give. He refused, first, because they had no right to dictate how much evidence must needs be forthcoming. Part of our trial here consists, in fact, in God's so adjusting the evidence to our moral condition that, while there is amply enough to determine the acceptance of the honest and good heart, there is no lavishing of proof.



II. Suppose the "sign from heaven" given.—Suppose that in the sky above Jerusalem had been disclosed the form of the Son of Man as the sun in his strength, ten thousand times ten thousand of the heavenly hosts on the right hand and the left, the first effect would doubtless have been unspeakable and overwhelming awe. But remember, belief in the Christ meant trust in the Christ, the homage of heart and soul. Do you think that the most magnificent display in the heavens would secure that?

III. No outward proof alone can determine belief in truths moral and spiritual.—Every kind of truth has its proper evidence. Mathematical truth has its evidence; but to crave mathematical proof outside its own proper region is unphilosophical, and may lead us to suspect that the absorbing study of mathematics disqualifies for, rather than aids, the search after truth of other kinds. Historical truth again is reached through its own proper evidence; but it is here that we touch upon the very point before us. Christianity rests on an historical basis, and because it does so sceptics are apt to assume that its truth or falsehood is *merely* matter of historical evidence. Doubtless the historical evidence must be sound; but is every one qualified to judge of its soundness? And so we have to point out that Christianity has a moral and spiritual basis also. Suppose there has appeared on the page of history One whom our own hearts and the universal consent of the civilised world pronounce to be perfect goodness, unrivalled purity, Divine dignity, love unequalled. Will not good men yield their love and devotion to Him who is perfect goodness? Will not bad men shrink from Christ and from His perfect purity, and be predisposed to question the historical evidence, because they hope thereby to free themselves from His claim upon their allegiance? For such men there are no signs from heaven. They are not given, simply because they would be useless (Luke xvi. 31).

IV. Obedience is the condition of faith.—Obedience to what we know leads to faith in what is yet to be revealed. The good ground in the parable of the sower, the only ground that brought forth fruit, is explained to be "the honest and good heart,"—honest, and therefore receptive of everything true; good, and therefore in closest sympathy with the noble, the loving, and the pure. But this is alone of Him from whom comes every good and perfect gift.—*Canon Jacob.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 11, 12. *Neglect not the signs given already.*—When we long for miracles, neglecting those standing miracles of our faith, the gospel and the Church; when our reason is satisfied of a doctrine or a duty, and yet we remain irresolute, sighing for the impulse of some rare spiritual enlightenment or excitement, for a revival or a mission or an oration to lift us above ourselves,—we are virtually asking to be shewn what we already confess, to behold a sign, while we possess the evidence.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*You cannot convince some men.*—Did you ever try to satisfy an impracticable man, or to remove all ground of offence

from one who is determined to find fault? The old Greek fable-writer was very wise. The stories of "The Wolf and the Lamb," and of "The Old Man and his Ass," bear a moral for all time. Jesus Christ told men that they were not to give that which was "holy to the dogs," or to cast their "pearls before swine." Life is too short, time and strength are too precious, to be wasted in vain endeavour.—*D. J. Hamer.*

*Sight more needed than signs.*—Persons who, after looking at what Christianity has wrought in the world, and the kind of influence it has on the souls of men, still ask for evidences of

Christianity, are of the same sort as these. They forget that demonstration is only possible of the visible or the tangible, and that there cannot be any scientific demonstration of such a thing as the Godhead of Christ. *What all such persons want is sight, not signs*—the power of seeing and appreciating the Saviour's moral glory, not evidences of Christianity.—*R. Glover.*

Ver. 12. *The Lord's deep sigh* in its great significance—1. A silent and yet decisive sign of His conflict and of His victory. 2. An unuttered word, containing a world of Divine words. 3. A fulfilment of the primitive prophecy concerning the breach between the external and the spiritual Israel. 4. A prophecy which stretches forward to the Cross and the Judgment.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*The infinite meaning of this sigh of Christ.*—1. As a breathing forth of the Divine patience over the visible world. 2. A collective expression of all the sufferings and all the patience of Christ. 3. A declaration of all the incarnate sorrow and endurance of the Lord in His Church.—*Ibid.*

*An unreasonable demand.*—In many cases of unbelief the individual is not so much to blame as the spirit of the age of which he is the representative. See 2 Cor. iv. 4. Such persons not only cannot recognise the signs of the kingdom of heaven, but are in a state of heart and mind to which no sign can possibly be given. We are indebted to the fine candour of the late

Mr. Darwin for a striking illustration of this. In his life there is an interesting correspondence with Professor Asa Gray, the great botanist, who, wondering how Darwin could remain unconvinced by the innumerable evidences of design in nature, asked him if he could think of any possible proof which he would consider sufficient. Mr. Darwin replied: "Your question is a poser. If I saw an angel come down to teach us so, and I was convinced, from others seeing him, that I was not mad, I should believe." If he had left it there, it might have been pertinent to ask him whether Christ is not just such an angel come down from heaven to teach us, and whether a sufficient number of persons did not see Him in the flesh, to say nothing of the multitudes who know Him in the spirit, to convince us that we are not mad in believing it. But he went on to say: "If man were made of brass and iron, and in no way connected with any other organism which had ever lived, I should perhaps be convinced." Nothing could be more candid, or more in keeping with the transparent honesty of the man. But what an acknowledgment! Man must cease to be man, and become a metal machine, and the universe must cease to be a harmonious whole, before there can be evidence enough for so simple and elementary a principle as design in the universe; and then only a "perhaps"! Is Christ's answer to the seekers after a sign out of date?—*J. M. Gibson, D.D.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—21.

##### (PARALLEL: MATT. xvi. 5-12.)

*A warning against formality and indifference.*—I. **What the caution refers to.**—1. A formal, hypocritical religion. 2. An indifference about all religion. The rich, the gay, the men of learning and philosophy, are too generally of this description.

II. **Some reasons for this caution.**—1. Because of our proneness to these evils. 2. Because of their fatal tendency. Do they not work incessantly till they vitiate the whole man—blinding the understanding, perverting the will, sensualising the affections, and causing every part of one's conduct to savour

of ungodliness? 3. Because of their ultimate effect. Eternal happiness and eternal misery are too important to be trifled with.

III. The means whereby it may be rendered effectual for our preservation.—

1. Get your soul deeply impressed with the principles of the gospel. 2. Be careful whom you choose as your associates. 3. Endeavour to realise the thought of the Judgment.—*C. Simeon.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 15. Of *leaven* in the Gospel I find three sorts interpreted to our hands, that we cannot mistake. 1. *The Pharisees*—of the leaven of superstition, consisting in phylacteries, phrases, and observances, and little else. 2. *The Sadducees*—of a leaven that smelt strong of profaneness, in their liberty of prophesying, calling in question angels and spirits, and the resurrection itself. 3. *The leaven of Herod*—beware that too; many times it is the bane of true religion, when God's truth and worship must be moulded up with Jeroboam's and with Herod's ends, squared to them, just as it is fittest to do their turns. Let all be abandoned—Pharisees', Sadducees', Herod's—and the truth take their place (1 Thess. ii. 3-6; 2 Cor. xi. 3; Rev. xxii. 15).—*Bishop Andrewes.*

*Erroneous doctrine is like leaven*—1. In regard of the commonness. 2. In regard of the quantity—little (1 Cor. v. 6). 3. In regard of the quality (Matt. xiii. 29). 4. In regard of its spreading property (Acts xx. 30). 5. In regard of its effects—leaven soureth, heateth, swelleth (Matt. vi. 16; Col. ii. 21; Acts vii. 54, 57; Col. ii. 18).—*E. Leigh.*

Ver. 16. *The disciples' misconception.*—In wondering at the disciples' curious misconception we ought to remember at least, as serving in a measure to account for it, how accustomed they were to hear our Lord speak in riddles, to have Him address them on many subjects in a mysterious and enigmatical way. Yet need we after all look further for an explanation of what seems to us a remarkable

mistake than to the character of their mental preoccupation, when we reflect on the wonderful facility with which the mind discolours and distorts things in the atmosphere of its own broodings, and the illusions it creates in so doing. Only think, for instance, of the irresistible tendency of the self-conscious, self-regarding young gentleman in society to suspect that people are either laughing at or admiring him when there is not the slightest ground for the suspicion, when perhaps not an eye in the room notices him; or of our haste to read in the words and gestures of another a covert allusion to that secret wrongdoing of ours with the memory of which we are burdened, when no such allusion is intended or could be.—*N. R. Wood.*

Ver. 21. *Why it is that we "do not understand"*—whether it be the principles of the Divine government, or the direction of the Divine purpose, or the meaning of the Divine oracles. 1. We do not always care enough to understand, and so will not be at the pains to discover. 2. We are too apt to discover and adopt only what is in sufficient harmony with our own preconceived opinions. 3. We do not use the right helps to enable us to understand; or, having the right helps, we do not use them in the right way. Reflexion, conversation, mingling with those who differ from us, etc. 4. We so seldom go to Scripture as the final tribunal of revealed truth, or place ourselves in the keeping of the Holy Spirit to be our Counsellor and Guide.—*Bishop Thorold.*



MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 22—26.

*The blind man at Bethsaida.* This incident, recorded only by St. Mark, may be considered both in a natural and a spiritual view, under which twofold aspect there can be no doubt that all our Lord's miracles of healing were intended to be viewed. He adopted this method to make Himself known as the Great Physician of the soul, who "forgiveth all our sins and healeth all our infirmities"; who, by the virtue which resides in Him, and which is called forth by the application of faith, removes the blindness of our understanding, the raging fever of our passions, the palsy of our spiritual affections, the lameness of our halting obedience; commands Satan and his unclean spirits to come out of us, and raises us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.

**I. A blind man is brought to Jesus to be cured.**—1. The restoring of sight to the blind was one of the signs to be looked for in the promised Messiah (Isa. xxxv. 5); and to this evidence Christ appealed, in the first place, in His answer to the Baptist's messengers (Matt. xi. 5). 2. Many remarkable instances of this kind of miracle might be referred to (see especially John ix.). The present example contains some peculiarities not found elsewhere. 3. There is a moral as well as a natural blindness, to which not merely a few unfortunate persons but all mankind by nature are subject (Isa. xliii. 8). (1) Such were the Gentiles (Eph. iv. 18). (2) Such were the Jews also, who, though they had not the same excuse of ignorance or want of light, yet were blinded by obstinate and invincible prejudice (Mark iv. 12). (3) Such are all of us by nature: born blind, and continuing so by our own fault; having no light in ourselves, and hating it when it is brought to us. Perhaps, like the Pharisees, we say we see; but this is our blindness. We see nothing as we ought to see, nothing as it really is. We see no deformity in sin, no beauty in holiness; no terrors in the law, no charms or attractions in the gospel; no weakness in ourselves, no all-sufficiency in Christ (Rev. iii. 17, 18). 4. It was to free all mankind from these spiritual infirmities, and not to relieve a few miserable objects from their bodily pains, that the Saviour appeared (Luke iv. 18).

**II. Our Lord, before beginning the cure, takes His patient to a private place, apart from the multitude.** 1. No reason is given why He did this, or why, after the cure was complete, He told him not to go back into the town, etc. (ver. 26). Perhaps the people of Bethsaida, like those of Nazareth (Matt. xiii. 57, 58), had resisted the evidence of former miracles performed amongst them, and therefore did not deserve another. At any rate, when we read this, and when we observe His disinclination on other occasions to have His fame blazed abroad, we are reminded of the character given Him by the prophet (Isa. xlii. 2). 2. "We also are oftentimes spiritually blind while we are in the town, *i.e.* this world; afterwards, being led out of the town, *i.e.* out of the world and its concerns, by Jesus Christ, we are healed." He does this in a variety of ways: by afflictions, by disappointments, by the loss of friends, by a change in our situation, etc. Anything, in short, which disentangles us from the world, detaches us from our former associates and pursuits, affords an opening for serious reflexion, and a closer acquaintance with our own hearts—anything which has this effect may be considered as a merciful dispensation of Christ to our souls, a taking us by the hand and leading us out of the town, preparatory to a perfect restoration.

**III. On a first exertion of His healing virtue our Lord cures the blind man only in part.**—He saw objects, but not distinctly. Men and trees waved to and fro before his eyes, so that he could not distinguish one object from

another. 1. This is always the case when a blind man is restored to sight by natural means; and it is necessary to obviate it by not allowing him the free use of his eyes at first, and by the gradual admission of light into the room. 2. Such was not our Lord's usual manner. He did all things well. Those who witnessed His cures were beyond measure astonished when they saw His patients restored to the immediate and full use of their senses, without the necessity of any precautions. 3. Here, however, He departs from His usual course, and as it were puts a restraint upon the virtue which resided in Him, so as to make its effect incomplete. Perhaps, according to the faith of this poor man, so was it done to him, which, being weak at first, required nursing and rearing by a partial exhibition of the Saviour's power. 4. At any rate the application to the spiritual recovery of sinners is much more exact than if the cure had been completed at once. When the eyes of our understanding are enlightened by the revelation of Christ, the first effect is not unlike what is here described. Our views of Divine things are very imperfect and confused. We are not all at once turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We experience at first a kind of twilight illumination, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Nor is this gradual conversion in any way derogatory to the great power of God. Was the cure of this blind man less perfect or less astonishing because it was not effected all at once? The material circumstance which constituted the miracle was this; he came, seeing no man; he went away, "seeing every man clearly." And so with respect to our souls; the great point to be considered is, what we were, and what we are (Eph. v. 8). It is not necessary that we should be able to refer to the time or place when light first flashed in upon our mind; it is enough if we can say, "One thing I know," etc. (John ix. 25).

**IV. The same process being repeated, the patient is perfectly restored.—**

1. The former trial, however unsuccessful apparently in part, had had the intended effect of raising the man's expectations and confidence in his Physician to a proper pitch. And Jesus, seeing that he had now faith to be healed, delays no longer to complete the cure. 2. It is the same with those whom He calls out of spiritual darkness into His marvellous light. The imperfect illumination vouchsafed them at first is designed only to exercise their faith, to make them love the light and desire more of it. Having once tasted of the heavenly gift, they feel an insatiable desire to increase in the knowledge of God, and to be filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. To them shall more be given as they are able to receive it, until they are "stablished, strengthened, settled," and "made perfect in every good work to do His will."

**V. The remarkable injunction with which the man is dismissed.—**1. There was the same reason (whatever that might be) for desiring him not to go into the town after his cure as for taking him out in order to cure him. 2. The eyes of our understanding being enlightened to see our lost condition as sinners and the great power of God our Saviour, we are commanded not to go back into the town, nor to tell it to any one in the town, but to go to our house. (1) Since it was the god of this world that first blinded our minds, the folly and danger of going back into the world after conversion is evident to common sense. If we do, we run the most serious risk of being again entangled therein and overcome. Nor is it enough that we should merely abstain from returning to the world; we must not even wish to do so, or indulge longing desires after what we have renounced. They are objects altogether at variance with our newly acquired sense (1 John ii. 15, 16; Luke ix. 62). (2) Still further to preserve us from worldly contamination, Christ forbids us even to tell or talk of what has happened to us, to the unspiritual. By such communications we are likely to do harm to ourselves, and no good to them. We may begin by

inviting them out of the town; we may end by going back into the town with them. (3) But although we are dissuaded from talking of these matters to the world in general, it by no means follows that we are to keep them to ourselves. On the contrary, having received such great mercies, we are to give glory to God, and at the same time be doing an inestimable service to those most dear to us, by endeavouring to open their eyes and to bring them to the knowledge and obedience of the faith. In the bosom of our own family, where we may count upon at least some measure of sympathy and attention, we are to do the work of a true friend for them and of an evangelist for Christ.

*The clearing of the sight.*—As in other cases, Jesus led this sufferer apart; as in other cases, He made use of certain means as well as of His word, teaching us the method and the secret of sacramental working; but, not as in other miracles, the cure is gradually wrought.

**I. It was intended to teach us how God deals differently with different souls.**—It is a rebuke to those who demand proofs of instantaneous conversion; it should be read with that passage which describes the growth of grace as gradual, like the growth of the grain of corn, “first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear,” which, while the man rises and sleeps night and day, grows he knoweth not how.

**II. As to the particular words in which the man describes his growth.**—“I see men walking, but they look like trees.” Large, indistinct, crowded, and hazy, like the mingled mass of the distant woods waving and bending in the breeze, or as when passing rapidly along we see the trees flit quickly by us in copse and hedgerow. The man had either never seen, or had long been unaccustomed to, the form of either man or tree; his was therefore an utterance doubly obscured, his eyes only partially transmitting objects which his mind only partially recognised. The man having thus truly described his half-restored condition, Jesus speaks to him a word of command: He bids him look up, and then he sees all men clearly.

**III. Looking at the spiritual meaning of this description, it has been urged that it is often the case when the work of grace is beginning that people mistake the nature and proportion of things around them.** Spiritual things and living truths still have much of the earthly clinging to them: and if life and movement be recognised at all, it is the dull vegetative life of mere existence, still rooted in the soil of this world, or spreading itself out in a hazy form of general indefinite goodness, not the active, personal, organic life of the regenerate man, which is part of the very life of God.

**IV. We notice a lesson of honesty and humility in the man's description.**—He does not claim an insight which he has not attained to. He speaks a lesson, gentle but severe, to those who, after hearing a sermon, or reading a treatise, or attending a service, or feeling an awakening of conscience, suddenly consider that they are converted, that they “can read their title clear,” that they have clear views, and so forth. The precocious child, who lectures its parents or strangers on religion; the converted prize-fighter, who suddenly turns from indulging in all kinds of brutal passions and lectures his neighbours who have been walking for years in the light on which he has persistently turned his back; the uneducated convert, who has picked up one text of Scripture, and on the strength of that ignores all that others have learned of the whole counsel of God,—all these may lay to heart the humility and truthfulness of this man.

**V. And in this gradual development of the spiritual powers there is also a strong and abiding word of comfort for many a struggling Christian.** Oftentimes we find those who, though they are interested and anxious, cannot obtain the steadfast gaze that they desire. Clouds drive across their spiritual firma-



ment; now all is clear and bright for a moment; now the fierce storm or the blinding mist sweeps over them, and their light is turned to darkness. They are not, as they were once, either blind or careless; the truth has shone in upon their souls, but they cannot retain it; their conscience is tender, but their understanding is dim. Let such take courage; they are just in the condition indicated by the text—they see men walking as it were trees. You who have been not only baptised and confirmed, but have earnestly worshipped and reverently communicated, you are different, widely different, from what you were once; but widely different also from what hereafter you shall be. Christ has led you to self-examination: the result is at once to excite your thankfulness for His marvellous work, and your humiliation for your own shortcoming. But He still is standing by you,—still in His house apart from the city's noise He is bending over you as you kneel; still to your soul His voice is speaking; still on His altar He waits for you, that again He may lay His hands upon you, again He may bid you lift up your hearts. And in His house, and through His Word, by the voice of His Church and the power of His sacraments, He will free you from the bondage and the blinding power of sin, and quicken all those faculties which have so long been paralysed or misused.—*G. C. Harris.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 23. *Christ's freedom in the use of means.*—This case and that of the deaf and stammering man in Decapolis have many points of resemblance. In both those who brought the diseased to Jesus prescribed to Him the mode of cure. Was it for the purpose of reproving and counteracting the prejudice which connected the cure with a certain kind of manipulation on the part of the curer that Jesus in both instances went so far out of His usual course, varying the manner of His action so singularly that, out of all His miracles of healing, these two stand distinguished by the unique mode of their performance? It is certain that, had Jesus observed one uniform method of healing, the spirit of formalism and superstition, which lies so deep in our nature, would have seized upon it, and linked it inseparably with the Divine virtue that went out of Him, confounding the channel with the blessing it conveyed.—*Dr. Hanna.*

*Christ, not means, the source of healing.*—If Christ's touch and Christ's saliva healed, it was not because of anything in them, but because He willed it so; and He Himself is the source of all the healing energy. Therefore let us keep these externals in their proper place

of subordination, and remember that in Him, not in them, lies the healing power.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*Led into solitude.*—As Israel was led into the wilderness that God might "speak to her heart," so often Christ draws us aside, if not by outward providences such as these, yet by awaking in us that solemn sense of personal responsibility and making us feel our solitude, that He may lead us to feel His all-sufficient companionship.—*Ibid.*

Vers. 24, 25. *The man's answer* is in accord with later scientific discovery. What we call the act of vision is really a twofold process; there is in it the report of the nerves to the brain, and also an inference, drawn by the mind, which previous experience has educated to understand what that report implies. In want of such experience an infant thinks the moon as near him as the lamp, and reaches out for it. And when Christian science does its Master's work by opening the eyes of men who have been born blind, they do not know at first what appearances belong to globes and what to flat and square objects. It is certain that every image conveyed to the brain reaches it upside-

down, and is corrected there. When Jesus then restored a blind man to the perfect enjoyment of effective, intelligent vision, He wrought a double miracle, one which instructed the intelligence of the blind man as well as opened his eyes. This was utterly unknown to that age.—*Dean Chadwick.*

Ver. 24. *Different conditions of the spiritual life.*—1. It is a happy state, if it is the first stage towards clearly seeing in perfect knowledge. 2. It is a gloomy and uncertain state, if the Christian should remain in it. 3. Worst of all, if through his own guilt he should return to this stage, falling into the new blindness of despair.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*Man and tree.*—A large part of the battle of life has been fought and gained when one has learned the difference between a man and a tree. For that is the difference between the great and the small, between mind and matter, between the eternal and the transitory, between earth and heaven.—*G. Hodges.*

*Christian progress.*—How dim and partial a glimmer of light comes to many a soul at the outset of the Christian life! How little a new convert knows about God and self and the starry truths of His great revelation! Christian progress does not consist in seeing new things, but in seeing the old things more clearly—the same Christ, the same Cross, only more distinctly and deeply apprehended, and more closely incorporated into my very being. We do not grow away from Him, but we grow into knowledge of Him.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 25. *The restoration of sight.*—In this verse the Evangelist just touches that which is the salient point in the blessing of the restoration of sight. For what is the great deprivation in blindness? It is a loss, doubtless, as the blind poet Milton sang, that not to them return, “Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn, or sight of vernal bloom, or summer’s rose, or

flocks and herds”—but still more, what he adds last, that they cannot see the “human face Divine.” Were it possible for a blind person to be restored to the faculty of seeing *persons*, though he remained blind to everything else, much more than half his deprivation would be removed. Now a great deal of that *moral* blindness of which the blindness of this man was the type consists in just this—that we do not see our fellow-men. We only see ourselves; we are sharp-sighted enough to our own interests, but blind to the wants and wishes of others. The love of self brings a gradual film over the moral vision, so that, reversing the process of the miracle, though at first we see every man clearly, by-and-by they are no more to us than vague shadows, as trees walking, and presently we cease to see them at all.—*Bishop A. Blomfield.*

Ver. 26. *A view of the miraculous.*—This fact, of a miracle done in intended secrecy and shrouded in deep darkness, suggests to us the true point of view from which to look at the whole subject of miracles. 1. People say they were meant to be attestations of His Divine mission. Yes, no doubt that is true partially; but that was never the sole or even the main purpose for which they were wrought; and when anybody asked Jesus Christ to work a miracle for that purpose only, He rebuked the desire and refused to gratify it. He wrought the miracle not coldly, in order to witness to His mission, but every one of them was the token because it was the outcome of His own sympathetic heart brought into contact with human need. And instead of the miracles of Jesus Christ being cold, logical proofs of His mission, they were all glowing with the earnestness of a loving sympathy, and came from Him as naturally as rays from the sunshine at sight of sorrow. 2. The same fact carries with it, too, a lesson about His character. Is not He here doing what He tells us to do?—“Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand

doeth." All goodness "does good by stealth," even if it does not "blush to find it fame"—and that universal mark of true benevolence marked His. He had to solve in His human life what we have to solve—the problem of keeping

the narrow path between ostentation of powers and selfish concealment of faculty; and He solved it thus: "Leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps."—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 27—38,  
and Chap. ix. 1.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xvi. 13-28; LUKE ix. 18-27.)

*Christ's catechism.*—I. Christ is such as to cause the world to think of Him.—

1. Because He professes to be the Saviour whom the world had long expected.
2. Because His appearance did not correspond with the world's expectations.
3. Because the advent of a Saviour was the world's great need.

II. Christ is interested in what the world thinks of Him.—1. He recognised the world's ability to form an idea of Him. 2. He had laboured to impart to the world a correct idea of Him. 3. He was conscious that the world had formed an idea of Him. 4. He seeks information of the result of His own teaching and the world's learning from the most reliable source.

III. Christ is differently thought of by the world.—1. He had imparted to the world an impression of superiority. "A great prophet." 2. The world had failed to perceive the unique character of His greatness. Only a great man. 3. This failure had its source in the union of Godhead with manhood.

IV. Christ is wishful that right ideas of Himself should exist in the world.—

1. He had been qualifying His followers to teach them.
2. He opportunely tests their mastery of them.
3. He ascertains the successful implantation of them.—*B. D. Johns.*

Ver. 34. *The necessity of self-denial.*—We ought to attach more than ordinary importance to this saying of our Lord, because it is evident that He Himself laid great stress on it. He had been conversing apart with His disciples, and particularly with Peter; and something that Peter said gave Him occasion to insist on this truth. He would not, however, address it privately to him or to the small band of His immediate followers, but He summoned the multitude to attend to Him, marking by this circumstance as strongly as possible the importance of what He was about to say: "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." He enforced the same truth again and again (Matt. x. 38; Luke xiv. 27). And is not the declaration in itself calculated to arouse our attention? If we know that there is anything without which we cannot be true followers of Christ, it surely ought to be well considered by us, because the very life and salvation of our souls must depend on it. Let us then take earnest heed to what Christ here says to us: let us consider well what that is which He declares to be necessary in order to prove our claim to be His disciples; nor let us rest till we have this evidence that we belong to Him—till this seal, as it were, is visibly set upon us to mark us out as His disciples indeed. The text requires but few words by way of explanation. To "deny oneself" is to refuse indulgence to our desires, not to do what we would naturally wish to do—to put a restraint upon ourselves, to withhold from any of our appetites that which would gratify them, and to act differently in any case to what nature would incline us,



### **I. Self-denial is necessary in order that we may prove our love and fidelity to Christ.**

1. A service which costs us nothing affords no very certain evidence of our attachment to any one. Now Christ would have us give proof of our loyalty and attachment to Him. He requires it of us as a positive duty to give up something, to make some sacrifice for Him, to oppose our inclinations in some way or other, in order that we may ascertain whether indeed love to His name is a strong and ruling principle within us. 2. There are many who are well enough disposed to the religion of Christ till it prescribes this duty. They appear willingly to hear the Scripture, to join in prayer, and to observe holy ordinances; and they will do many things which would seem to indicate an earnestness and zeal in the cause of Christ; but they draw back when called to the difficult exercise of self-denial. But what is the value of a service which cautiously avoids all toil and difficulty? Where is the proof of our being sincere in the love of an object if we will encounter no hardship to attain it? We see men ready to practise much self-denial and to think little of it in any matter in which their hearts are engaged. Look, for example, at the man whose ambition it is to prosper in business. What a life of self-denial is his! He labours even to weariness, rises early, late takes rest, eats the bread of carefulness, denies his nature the rest that it needs, and refuses many enjoyments which he would be glad to partake but that they would hinder him in the object that he has in view. Even the man of pleasure must in the pursuit of his object often use self-denial: he must put a restraint on himself at times, and refuse a less pleasure for the present, however strongly his wishes may incline to it, in order to obtain a greater one in prospect. Nay, even the customary civilities of society impose on us frequent self-denial. A man will often deny himself, will often refrain from doing what he would otherwise wish to do, in order to observe the rules of good breeding and courtesy. If then we are content in the pursuit of business or of pleasure to deny ourselves, if we are willing and able to practise it in order that we may observe the decent courtesies of life and be esteemed well mannered in society, what must be said of us if we refuse to practise it for Christ's sake, if we can use self-denial on other occasions and for other purposes readily, and only feel it too irksome when called on to use it for the purpose of pleasing Him? What must be said of us but that the love of God is not in us?

**II. Self-denial is necessary to the due discharge of our duties.** For many of these we cannot perform except at the expense of denying ourselves. 1. How can the rich relieve the poor as they ought, or how can the poor as they ought befriend each other, except they deny themselves for each other's sake? We must in part sacrifice our own ease, we must give up our own way, we must abridge our own enjoyments, if we would do good to others according to the will of Christ. "Bear ye one another's burdens." This is His law; and it is evident that we cannot pretend to fulfil it except we deny ourselves. "Look not," saith the apostle, "every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"; and then he adds, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," inasmuch as His Divine conduct furnishes the best example of self-denying charity. Not a single day passes which will not furnish many occasions for this: nay, not an hour's intercourse with our fellow-men but will afford us opportunities of denying ourselves, — by giving up, for instance, our own wishes, and yielding to the wishes of another; by "taking the lowest room," or choosing the least desirable lot; by securing the comfort or ease or honour of those about us at some sacrifice on our own part; by putting a restraint upon our feelings; by imposing silence on our tongue, refusing it the licence which it loves, not allowing it to utter words "that may do hurt," not answering again, nor resenting wrong, nor resisting evil. In

a thousand ways which only a watchful conscience can discover, and which no one may be privy to but God Himself, we may do what our Lord here commands us. Our daily course, under the most ordinary circumstances, may become a course of virtuous self-renunciation—a course of habitual obedience to the injunction in the text, “Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” 2. There are at the present day great efforts made by the Church for the extension of the Lord’s kingdom among men, for propagating both at home and abroad the gospel of the grace of God. These efforts cannot be sustained except by the free-will offerings of Christians—they must be given up unless the members of the Church liberally give of their substance for their support. These multiplying demands on Christians cannot possibly be answered unless they contrive in some way to lessen their personal expenses, to spend less on self-indulgence, to save somewhat more by self-denial. Then, and not till then, will the resources of the Church be adequately replenished, and means be supplied her sufficient for carrying on her great designs of training her own children in the service and worship of God, and of “preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

III. **Self-denial is necessary for the purification of our minds.**—1. As we were born in sin, and our nature is consequently corrupt, it must be watched over, restrained, and subdued. Our innate propensities are all on the side of evil, and if any of them gain the mastery over us we are thereby brought into bondage to sin. Now the only way to prevent this is to mortify these propensities, to deny them indulgence, to oppose them at their first rising, however earnest and importunate they may be, and by an act of self-denial to put a restraint upon them. The will grows unruly if it be not crossed; the soul is weakened by self-indulgence; faith languishes when the senses are unceasingly gratified; the affections will not rise to things above if we grant them unrestricted enjoyment of things on earth. Therefore it is that a Christian should be watchful for opportunities of exercising self-control, and not wait till his desires point to something absolutely unlawful. He should, for instance, make his ordinary meals occasions for doing so, learning to keep in check the lower appetites of his nature in the common matter of meat and drink. He should observe the same in reference to dress, refusing indulgence to himself in things which might awaken vanity and stimulate strongly the lust of the eye. In many ways, from which he will not receive the least taint of asceticism, nor do any rude violence to nature, or obscure to himself the blessed truth that God “giveth us all things richly to enjoy,” he may deny himself and bring his desires under control. 2. Whenever the exercise of self-denial is spoken of, there naturally arises in the mind a repugnance to it, on account of the difficulty of it and the pain which attends it. But let us not give way to this repugnance, seeing the necessity of self-denial is so absolute. (1) The exercise is *difficult* doubtless—very difficult; but think not that we are left to encounter the difficulty alone, to meet it in the feebleness of our own nature. No, God will give us His Holy Spirit if we ask Him, and with His Divine co-operation we shall be able to do what otherwise would not only be difficult but impossible. (2) With regard to the *pain* of it, it is granted that it must be painful, more or less so, always. The very word implies it. But is not pain suffered for Christ and in His service better than ease secured by deserting Him? Is not pain met with in the performance of duty more to be prized than the ease which is sought in the neglect of it? Is not pain endured in seeking the purification of our nature better a thousandfold than the indulgence which must complete its debasement? Besides, the pain is but momentary, the advantage that flows from it lasting. See Rom. viii. 13. The faithful soldier and servant of Christ who manfully engages in this

warfare shall hereafter share his Lord's triumph and enter into His rest (Rev. iii. 21).—*G. Bellett.*

Vers. 27-30. *Christ's Cross, and ours.* This section has the announcement of the Cross as its centre, prepared for on the one hand by a question, and followed on the other by a warning that His followers must travel the same road.

1. **The preparation for the announcement of the Cross** (vers. 27-30). 1. Why did Christ begin by asking about the popular judgment of His personality? Apparently in order to bring clearly home to the disciples that, as far as the masses were concerned, His work and theirs had failed, and had for net result total misconception. Who that had the faintest glimmer of what He was could suppose that the stern, fiery spirits of Elijah or John had come to life again in Him? 2. The second question, "But whom say ye that I am?" with its sharp transition, is meant to force home the conviction of the gulf between His disciples and the whole nation. Mark, too, that this is the all-important question for every man. Our own individual "thought" of Him determines our whole worth and fate. 3. How did these questions and their answers serve as introduction to the announcement of the Cross? (1) They brought clearly before the disciples the hard fact of Christ's rejection by the popular voice, and defined their position as sharply antagonistic. A rejected Messiah could not fail to be, sooner or later, a slain Messiah. (2) Then clear, firm faith in His Messiahship was needed to enable them to stand the ordeal to which the announcement, and still more its fulfilment, would subject them. (3) Again, the significance and worth of the Cross could only be understood when seen in the light of that great confession. 4. The charge of silence contrasts singularly with the former employment of the apostles as heralds of Jesus. The silence was partly punitive and partly prudential. (1) It was punitive, inasmuch as the people had already had abundantly the proclamation of His gospel, and had cast it away. (2) It was prudential, in order to avoid hastening on the inevitable collision; not because Christ desired escape, but because He would first fulfil His day.

II. **The announcement of the Cross** (vers. 31-33).—There had been many hints before this; for Christ saw the end from the beginning. His death was before Him, all through His days, as the great purpose for which He had come. How much more gracious and wonderful His quick sympathy, His patient self-forgetfulness, His unwearied toil, shew against that dark background! 1. Mark here the solemn necessity. Why "must" He suffer? The cords which bind this sacrifice to the horns of the altar were not spun by men's hands. The great "must" which ruled His life was a cable of two strands—obedience to the Father, and love to men. He would save; therefore He "must" die. The same "must" stretches beyond death. "Christ that died" is no gospel until you go on to say, "Yea, rather, that is risen again." 2. Peter's rash "rebuke," like most of his appearances in the Gospel, is strangely compounded of warm-hearted, impulsive love and presumptuous self-confidence. He found fault with Christ. For what? Probably for not trusting to His followers' arms, or for letting Himself become a victim to the "must" which Peter thought of as depending only on the power of the ecclesiastics in Jerusalem. He blames Christ for not hoisting the flag of a revolt. This blind love was the nearest approach to sympathy which Christ received; and it was repugnant to Him, so as to draw the sharpest words from Him that He ever spoke to a loving heart. Not thus was He wont to repel ignorant love, nor to tell out faults in public; but the act witnessed to the recoil of His fixed spirit from the temptation which addressed His natural human shrinking from death, as well as to His desire that, once for all, every dream of resistance by force should be shattered. Note that it may be the work of "Satan" to appeal to the things "that be of men," however innocent, if by



so doing obedience to God's will is hindered. Note, too, that Simon may be "Peter" at one moment and "Satan" at the next.

**III. The announcement of the Cross as the law for the disciples too** (vers. 34-38).—Christ's followers must follow, but men can choose whether they will be His followers or not. So the "must" is changed into "let him," and the "if any man will" is put in the forefront. The conditions are fixed, but the choice of accepting the position is free. 1. The law for every disciple is self-denial and taking up his cross. This does not merely mean accepting meekly God-sent or men-inflicted sorrows, but persistently carrying on the special form of self-denial which my special type of character requires. It will include these other meanings, but it goes deeper than they. 2. The first of the reasons for the law in ver. 35 is a paradox, and a truth with two sides. To wish to save is to lose life; to lose it for Christ's sake is to save it. Flagrant vice is not needed to kill the real life. Clean, respectable selfishness does the work effectually. The deadly gas is invisible and has no smell. But while all selfishness is fatal, it is self-surrender and sacrifice, "for My sake and the gospel's," which is life-giving. 3. The "for" of ver. 36 seems to refer back to the law in ver. 34, and the verse enforces the command by an appeal to self-interest, which in the highest sense of the word dictates self-sacrifice. The men who live for self are dead, as Christ has been saying. A man gets rich, and in the process has dropped generous impulses, affections, interest in noble things, perhaps principle and religion. He has shrivelled and hardened into a mere fragment of himself; and so, when success comes, he cannot much enjoy it, and was happier, poor and sympathetic, and enthusiastic and generous, than he is now, rich and dwindled. He who loses himself in gaining the world does not win it, but is mastered by it. 4. A wholesome contempt for the world's cackle is needed for following Christ. The geese on the common hiss at the passer-by who goes steadily through the flock. How grave and awful is that irony, if we may call it so, which casts the retribution in the mould of the sin! The Judge shall be "ashamed" of such unworthy disciples—shall blush to own such as His. May we venture to put stress on the fact that He does not say that He will reject them? 5. How marvellous the transition from the prediction of the Cross to this of the Throne! We do not know Jesus unless we know Him as the crucified Sacrifice for the world's sins, and as the exalted Judge of the world's deeds. 6. He adds a weighty word of enigmatical meaning, lest any should think that life was speaking only of some far-off judgment. The destruction of Jerusalem seems to be the event intended. It was a kind of rehearsal, or picture in little, of that coming and ultimate great day of the Lord, and was meant to be a "sign" that it should surely come.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Vers. 36-37. *The loss of the soul.*—I. **The character of some of those who may be said to pursue the present world at the expense of their souls.**—1. Consider, first, the case of those intensely occupied with the pursuit of the pleasures and indulgences of the world. It is no crime to be happy in this state of being (Phil. iv. 4). The crime is either in seeking happiness from wrong sources, or in so eagerly drinking at the streams of earthly joy which the bounty of God has opened to us, as to forget or neglect the Fountain where alone the soul can be satisfied. 2. Consider, next, the case of those who are pursuing, with the like intensity, the interests of this life. Here also a reasonable regard to our own worldly interest, and that of others connected with us, is not condemned in Scripture (Prov. xxii. 29; 1 Cor. iv. 12; 1 Tim. v. 8). But if these worldly interests are pursued with feverish anxiety, from wrong motives or by wrong means; if they are the main objects for which we labour; if their pursuit is connected with disobedience to the will of God,—then the supposition of the text is

realised : the world is gained, but the soul is lost. 3. In like manner Scripture does not demand the austere rejection of worldly honours. Rank and natural influence, if it be the pleasure of the Most High to bestow them, are to be received with gratitude, and consecrated to the glory of the Giver, and to the benefit, temporal and spiritual, of His creatures. If, however, mistaking the means for the end, we sit down satisfied with the possession of reputation or influence, without considering the objects to which they are to be dedicated ; if worldly honours are the main objects of desire ; if the pursuit of them be connected with envy, fretfulness, or ambition, with the commission of sin, or the neglect of duty ; if, in struggling for the corruptible crown, the love of God, of the Redeemer, of heavenly things, and of one another is suffered to decline, and in wearing it the lowliness of the gospel spirit is sacrificed, —this, again, is to incur the condemnation of the text.

II. **What is included in the loss of the soul.**—1. The nature and value of the soul of man. (1) Its intrinsic excellence and dignity. (2) The price paid, and that by Divine appointment, for the redemption of the soul. (3) The description given of the soul in Scripture, as the grand object of contention between the powers of heaven and hell. (4) The mighty apparatus of means and instruments which it has pleased God to put into action for the recovery of the soul. (5) And finally its capacity for the pursuits and enjoyments of another state of existence. With what faculties must that creature be endowed who, day and night and without ceasing, sings the praises of the Lord, who sees God as He is and knows Him as he himself is known! 2. What is more distinctly implied in the term “lost.” (1) To “lose” the soul is not, as some, without the smallest warrant either from reason or Scripture, have ventured to affirm, to be annihilated. (2) The loss of the soul is represented in Scripture as a penalty inflicted by the hand of God Himself. (3) The loss of the soul is represented in Scripture as involving a species of suffering altogether without alleviation. We have perhaps witnessed the misery which the unrestrained dominion even of a single passion is able to inflict upon the sinner : conceive, then, all the faculties employed, and all the bad passions let loose, for the torment of the sufferer. Imagine, for instance, the discernment of truth employed only to assure the lost creature of the awful fact of his own eternal ruin. Conceive the powers of calculation, perhaps infinitely enlarged, and altogether engaged in familiarising the mind with ages of interminable woe. Conceive memory converted into a mere storehouse for the materials of anguish, recalling every neglected opportunity, every wasted warning, every lesson of truth forgotten, and every invitation of love refused. Imagine the conscience, which perhaps has slumbered through the whole period of our human existence, awaking from its temporary slumber, and searing the mind with images of deeper woe and more insufferable torment.

III. **The folly of thus sacrificing the soul to gain the world.**—On this subject it is not necessary to enlarge, because every line in the preceding argument leads decisively to this conclusion. One observation, however, I may make. It has, for the sake of argument, been taken for granted that it is possible to gain the world by the sacrifice of the soul. But how infinitely far is such a supposition from the fact! How few attain even a small part of the worldly objects at which they aim! How rarely are the hopes of the ambitious, or the covetous, or the sensual in the smallest degree realised! How difficult is it to obtain the prizes of life! how impossible to keep them! But to return to the point more immediately insisted upon in the text : suppose every object accomplished, every interest secured, and honour won, and pleasure enjoyed, what can they “profit” the man rolling on the gulf we have been contemplating, and shut out for ever from hope, from heaven, and from God?—*J. W. Cunningham.*

# OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 28. *The world's estimate of Christ.*—1. Even an unbelieving world never gives a small name to Christ; for the names here suggested are those of the greatest of men. 2. The peculiarity of unbelief, that it can believe in old prophets brought back more easily than in new prophets raised up. Be a believer in a living God, who not only has given in the past, but in the present is giving heroes, sages, saints, and prophets. Happy those who see God at work around them! 3. A certain grudging spirit marks their estimates, reluctant to ascribe more dignity to Jesus than they can help. Beware of that spirit.—*R. Glover.*

Ver. 29. *Christ's questions.*—Christ asks, "Whom say ye that I am?" in no doubtful and apologetic tone. He demands and expects an answer. It is His right. It is obedience to the plainest duty. Neglect on our part is an insult to our Lord, whose we are and whom we are bound to serve. It is treason to a lost world, which needs to be helped to an acceptance of its Redeemer, and which is hindered by any reluctance to confess Him on the part of His disciples. If Christians hide the faith which is in them, or if they veil it by silence or the neglect of appropriate action, they are doing a grievous wrong as well as immeasurable mischief.

*Loyalty to Christ.*—The power and reach of genuine loyalty to Christ cannot be over-estimated. It is so spontaneous that it is unquestioned. When the sun is riding in unclouded splendour in mid-heaven, there is no occasion for asking from what fountain of light the glory of the noontide is pouring. And when Jesus Christ is so heartily owned and accepted and loved by a man that all which he is or does is in a measure transfigured by his affection for his adorable Lord, there is no dispute as to who and what Christ is to that man. Nothing so

blesses the world, nothing so helps on the advance of the kingdom of God, as the testimony which consecrated lives bear to the truth and worth of the faith of the gospel.

*Peter's reply.*—1. The reply of Peter is more marvellous in the lips of a Jew, whose great creed was the Unity of God, than in the lips of any other. 2. In all ages, in some form or other, men have expressed their faith in the Divinity of Christ. 3. The more refined the soul, the more adoring is its estimate of Christ. 4. They who truly honour God will very readily believe that He has love enough to become incarnate and save men.

Ver 30. "*Tell no man of Him.*"—This is partly a temporary precept, postponing the disciples' testimony until after Calvary, on the ground that already the curiosity of the nation was over-roused, and interfered with the Saviour's teaching; and is partly a precept of perpetual guidance. Tell people what Christ has done, and only assist them to find out for themselves who He is. A ready-made definition of the Saviour, saving people the trouble of thinking, is not a real service to any soul.—*R. Glover.*

Vers. 32, 33. *Spiritual exaltation.*—Moments of spiritual exaltation are often followed by moments of spiritual exhaustion, and a good man is never more perilously open to temptation than after a long and high strain of devotion. So Peter falls from the height of his good confession to the depth of Christ's displeasure, and from being inspired by the Spirit of all truth and goodness to being the mouth-piece of the spirit of all evil and error.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

*Learn*—1. In the best of men there is weakness and liability to err. 2. Through mistaken kindness we may become the tempters of our brethren. 3. We must never lower our standard



of duty because friends seek to spare us.

Vers. 34-38. *The fundamentals of the Christian fellowship.*—1. Its laws.

(1) The true denier of himself is the true confessor. (2) The true cross-bearer is the true knight of the Cross. (3) The true follower after Christ in obedience is the true conqueror. 2. Its grounds. (1) He who will save his life in self-seeking shall lose it; he who loses it in devotion to Christ shall gain it. (2) He who lays down his soul to win the world loses with his soul the world also; he who has gained his soul has with his soul gained the world also. (3) To seek honour in the world while ashamed of Christ leads to infamy before the throne of Christ; but shame in the world leads to honour with Him. (4) Readiness to die with Christ leads through death to eternal glory.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

Ver. 34. *Words addressed to disciples.*

—We must come to Christ in order to come *after* Him. To wish to go to heaven when we die is not the same thing as to wish to follow Christ while we live. Following Christ means walking in the path that He trod.

**I. To follow Christ we must take up the cross.**—1. What is the cross? Trial, suffering, difficulty, etc. Divinely appointed—not self-imposed. The reproach of Christ (John xv. 20; Phil. i. 29; 1 Pet. iv. 16). 2. What is it to “take it up”? Voluntary acceptance (John iv. 34, xviii. 11; Matt. xi. 29). Not to be dragged by us—nor forced upon us.

**II. To take up the cross we must deny self.**—1. What is “self”? It is the personality taking the throne, claiming, possessing, and managing the whole being. This is a condition of “selfness.” There is *unrighteous* self and *self-righteous* self (John v. 30, viii. 28; Phil. ii. 7). 2. What is it to “deny” self? Notice the difference between denying to yourself certain things and denying *self* (Luke xxii. 57).

**III. To deny self we must enthrone**

**Christ.**—1. Christ and self cannot reign together (Gal. ii. 20; Rom. vi. 11). 2. Only Christ can dethrone self (1 Pet. iii. 15; 2 Cor. vi. 16, xiii. 5). —*E. H. Hopkins.*

*Self-denial.*—1. Abnegation is not itself the good, but the most universal condition for the human attainment of the good. 2. Christ promises not happiness but life: yet sometimes life through death: the right hand may have to be cut off or the right eye plucked out. 3. We are slow to believe that the cross of anguish can be a tree of life.—*Prof. F. J. A. Hort.*

*The life of religion.*—1. The exercise of self-denial infers the possession and display of all the milder virtues. Where this exists, there must be humility, diffidence, self-command, respect for authority, meekness, gentleness, goodness, temperance, charity. 2. The exercise of mortification infers the presence and exercise of all the stronger virtues. Where this is, there must be truth, integrity, justice, fortitude, contempt of pain, fearlessness of death. 3. The imitation of Christ requires the exercise of all those amiable graces which constitute the life and spirit of religion in the soul. Where that is, there must be faith, hope, love, piety, purity, peace, heavenly-mindedness, devotion. In short, these duties comprehend all the duties of morality and religion; and the exercise of them is only the discharge of some religious or moral duty—of something that is wise, dignified, good, and which could not be exhibited in the same spirit without their presence and power.—*T. S. Jones, D.D.*

*Self-sacrifice.*—That which especially distinguishes a high order of man from a low order of man, that which constitutes human goodness, human greatness, human nobleness, is surely not the degree of enlightenment with which men pursue their own advantage; but it is self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice, the disregard of personal pleasure, personal indulgence, personal advantage remote or present, because some other line of conduct is more right.

*Note the order of the three things.*—Deny self—take up cross—follow Me. Perplexity and spiritual difficulties often arise from a *wrong order of right things*. Thus we may read the words as if our Lord had said, “Let him take up his cross and deny himself,” etc. Taking up the cross may be understood as meaning much the same thing as denying self, which is not correct, or we may be putting *following* Christ first. But this is to miss the chief point in this lesson. “Let him deny himself”—that is the main and *first* direction that must be understood and obeyed. We shall never *take up* the cross—consent to it, and do it willingly—until we have reached the point of denying self. The mind, of which self is the centre, will never *take up* the cross; it may sullenly endure to have it laid upon it, it may put up with it as that which is inevitable, but it will never *take* it up as an act of willing submission. But the mind of Christ is the mind that cheerfully yields to all that the Father appoints.—*E. H. Hopkins.*

A cross is an instrument on which something is to be put to death. Taking it up is not wearing an ornament, nor even just carrying a burden, but putting something to death. What? Sin. Not some incarnate sin that we can catch and bind as they took Jesus, not some other personality, but the sin that is in us—the love of self, the love of the world, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Sin is a desperate enemy. And to be rid of it means thorough work, not coaxing it, not hiding it, not forgetting it, but putting it to death.—*C. M. Southgate.*

*Consider your cross.*—You may try, if you like, to go through life and not see a “cross”; or, if you like, you may consider it; you may avoid it, or you may meet it; you may resist, or you may acquiesce in it; you may murmur under it, or you may be still; you may drag it, or you may carry it; you may be in a hurry to lay it down, or you may wish to wait God’s time:—but blessed is that man who considers

his cross, and does not fly from it; who bears it silently, cheerfully, joyfully, and hastens not to be rid of it, but patiently tarries the Lord’s leisure. To that man that “cross” is his soul’s cure; it is the Spirit’s school; it is the badge of his discipleship, the token of his Heavenly Father’s love, the road to glory, the opportunity for all the promises, the earnest of an eternal crown.—*J. Vaughan.*

*The cross the way to life.*—

Wouldst thou inherit life with Christ  
on high?

Then count the cost, and know

That here on earth below

Thou needs must suffer with thy Lord,  
and die.

We reach that gain, to which all else  
is loss,

But through the Cross!

Not e’en the sharpest sorrows we can  
feel,

Nor keenest pangs, we dare

With that great bliss compare,

When God His glory shall in us reveal,  
That shall endure when our brief woes  
are o’er,

For evermore.—*Dach.*

“Follow Me.”—This implies not merely to believe His doctrine, obey His commandments, and trust in Him for salvation, but also to imitate Him in His spirit and conduct—in the holiness, activity, and usefulness of His life—in that love to God and man, that zeal for the Divine glory, that humility, patience, meekness, perseverance, and resignation with which He did and suffered His Heavenly Father’s will,—in consequence of which He was exposed to hunger, thirst, poverty, and privations, to the contradiction of sinners, scorn of men, stripes, imprisonment, to all the horrors of Gethsemane and torments of Golgotha.—*T. S. Jones, D.D.*

Ver. 35. *The selfish, sinful life and the true, spiritual life hang at opposite ends of the scale-beam.*—The dip of the one means the ascent of the other. Self-denial is but choosing the better; denying the lower is accepting the

higher. The soul cannot live in both at once; indeed, can truly live in the higher alone. We need only to keep this compensation in mind to see the excelling charm of self-denial. It is not the bare going without something pleasant, but giving up one attraction for a greater.—*C. M. Southgate.*

Ver. 36. *The worth of the soul.*—We cannot overrate our nature, as we cannot underrate our merit; we cannot think too highly of ourselves as immortals, or too humbly of ourselves as transgressors. There is quite as much danger in our undervaluing our immortality, as there is in our exaggerating our merit. In very deed we are more prone to the one than we are to the other; for if self-righteousness slays its thousands, self-neglect slays its tens of thousands. 1. The soul! that thinking, conscious, deathless essence, which thrills and throbs in every tenement of clay before me and around me,—that soul! invisible, yet perceptible; wrapped up in the mortal, yet itself immortal; passing away, yet never to end:—that soul! we argue that its worth is immense, because its origin was most exalted. 2. We argue the worth of the soul from the vast capacities and powers with which it is endowed. What a wonderful thing is the mind of man! How wondrous is his power of love! how deep the bitterness of his hate! how dark his desperation of revenge! how insatiable and yearning his desires! how high the inspirations of his soul! how all the drops he gathers from the cisterns of created good can never slake or satisfy the yearnings of his immortal mind! how he still craves and longs after something higher and more pure than earth can furnish! And, then, what a capability it has of enjoyment! what a capability of endurance! 3. I argue the value of the soul still more emphatically from its dread immortality. There is the mysterious attribute, compared with which all things temporal are but shadows and

day-dreams. 4. I argue the worth of the soul still more emphatically from the fact that it was redeemed at an untold price: it was ransomed with the blood of God. 5. But if the worth of the soul be so immense, the loss of the soul must be tremendous. We therefore argue the fearfulness of that loss, because it involves the sacrifice and the shipwreck of all for which man was first created, and which Christ has redeemed to Him by His atoning blood—all that God can bestow or man receive. Neither is this all: there is not only privation of all that is good and glorious—there is also the endurance of God's everlasting anger, whose frown is death and whose smile is life; there is the perpetual gnawing despair of one that has made shipwreck of his all; there is the smouldering remorse, the worm that never dieth.—*H. Stowell.*

*World and soul.*—1. It is impossible to gain the whole world, even at the sacrifice of our soul. None but Christ was ever tempted with such a huge bait. 2. The soul may be lost for the sake of securing a very infinitesimal portion of the world: Esau, Ahab, Judas. 3. In the ordinary course of things such a part of the world as is sufficient for our happiness may be easily gained without exposing the soul to loss (Prov. viii. 21, iii. 16, x. 4, xxii. 29); but even were this not so, nothing could compensate for the loss of the soul. 4. By endeavouring to gain the whole world or any part of it at the expense of the soul, we do not only disclaim the greatest good or happiness, but incur and invite the greatest evil and misery, which is not the losing the soul absolutely, however grievous and shocking to nature, but the keeping it, together with the gains and wages of sin, so as to wish it were lost. 5. Whereas by endeavouring to gain the whole world, though with the loss of our souls, it is impossible for us to gain the whole, and we are not so certain to gain any competent part of it; on the other hand, by endeavouring to save our souls,



though with the loss of the world, we may not only be sure to save them, but to save them with advantage, or to purchase for ourselves a greater salvation.—*B. Kennet, D.D.*

*The world as a law of life.*—You may be as ignorant and as rude in your life as a Hottentot, and as poor as Lazarus, and yet have gained the world and lost your life. For this is not merely a question of the things which you acquire by your exchange, it is a question of the law under which you put yourself, of the moral quality of the end which you seek.—*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*

*The soul that may be lost.*—A German commentator who is usually very diffuse tersely and truly observes with respect to this passage, "He who will understand it does understand it." There is no real room for doubt as to the meaning of our Lord's words. The soul which may be lost is the very inmost seat of being; that which thinks in each one of us, but is not thought; that which feels, but is not feeling; that which remembers and is conscious, but is neither consciousness nor memory; that depth, that abyss of life which we so rarely explore, yet which is within each one of us, which we carry everywhere with us,—the one mystery of which perhaps we know less than any other, and yet our very inmost self.—*Canon Liddon.*

*"If."*—What a world of meaning there is in that little word "if"! It suggests the fact that few, perhaps not one in ten thousand, do gain that portion of the world on which they have set their heart. Many run in the race, but only one gains the prize; and not seldom he who bids fair to win fails through something which we call chance or accident.—*J. W. King.*

*Ver. 37. A business question.*—The apostles had been men of business; here was a business question indeed. They were decidedly practical, and they were met on their own ground. Their answer is not recorded. They doubtless thought long and often on it.

Their final decision we know. They concluded their soul was valuable enough to justify them in giving up their affairs to save it; in giving up their time, ease, and indulgence to save it; in surrendering their reputé, home, and country to save it; and, finally, in laying down their life to save it.—*T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.*

*Ver. 38. Confessing or denying Christ.*—1. Confessing or denying Christ is certainly no mere affair of words. Yet words, though weak, are not worthless. Whatever worthy witness words can bear, they will not fail to utter in any loving and thorough-going confession of our loving Lord. 2. Confessing Christ and being confessed by Christ are not to be separated in our thought, like work-day and pay-day, as if the confessing were all here and the being confessed all there. What comes out there is simply the flash of an awakened consciousness of a judgment of Christ which has been going on here every day under the eyes of the invisible witnesses of many a negligent life. 3. Confessing or denying Christ here is not a question solely as to the totality or average of character, but quite as much a question as to the particulars of character. Point by point the world compares the professed copy with its model, and recognises agreements or contradictions in detail. No otherwise can it be in presence of the angels of God.—*J. M. Whiton.*

*Conduct and character.*—How does a son of a wise and virtuous father confess or deny him most expressively? Certainly not by the word which declares the eternal relationship, not by saying "Father," though he ought to say it. Rather by conduct and character; either by the wise and virtuous following of parental example, which bespeaks him as his father's own son, heir of his spirit as of his name, or else by the course of folly and vice, which denies all moral affinity with him. So on the father's part; let father and son be in the

same society, how does the wise and virtuous father most effectively own or disown the son before intelligent observers? Certainly not by saying, or omitting to say, "My son"; rather by being in the same circle with him as an object of comparison before observant witnesses, by the light which the father's character reflects upon the son, to the son's honour or dishonour as the imitator or neglecter of a noble model. —*Ibid.*

*On being ashamed of Jesus.*—Those who would willingly follow Jesus where the road is smooth and easy, but leave Him where it is rugged and hard; who inwardly approve of His doctrine, but from the ridicule of the profane are ashamed to avow it; who punctually attend the routine of worship, but dispense with the observance of duties to which they are not compelled by human laws; who can occasionally associate with the drunkard and hear the name of God profaned without concern; who have no objection to do wrong when the multitude give their sanction; who, when unnoticed or secure of escaping censure, can lift the rod of oppression or receive the wages of iniquity; who can cherish pride, vanity, avarice, and ambition, and yet by nice dissimulation affect the opposite virtues; who can be

tender and partial to themselves, but austere and cruel to others; who perform no duty on which human applause is not bestowed, and are deterred from no vice which fashion or common practice countenances;—men of this character, and all who resemble them—all false Christians, in short, who in public and private life have not the fear and love of God before their eyes, whatever may be their reception from the world—of them shall Jesus Christ be ashamed when in transcendent glory He shall come to judge the world. It is obvious, then, from this climax of vice and folly, that nothing under a sincere, uniform, and universal obedience to the moral law which Jesus came to fulfil will be accepted from His followers; and that no pretences, excuses, and palliations will avail, if this essential and absolutely necessary condition be not complied with.—*A. Stirling, LL.D.*

*Adulterous generation*—not because the particular sin of adultery was so frequent in that age, but because by every kind of sin a man under the contract of religion runs into that character wherewith Solomon describes the adulteress, who "forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God" (Jas. iv. 4).—*Dean Young.*

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 2. *Compassion for the needy.*—King Oswald of Northumbria accompanied the monk Aidan in his long missionary journeys as interpreter. One day, as he feasted with the monk by his side, the thane, or noble of his war-band, whom he had set to give alms to the poor at his gate, told him of a multitude that still waited fasting without. The king at once bade the untasted meat before him be carried to the poor, and his silver dish be divided piecemeal among them. Aidan seized the royal hand and blessed it. "May this hand," he cried, "never grow old!"

Ver. 4. *"From whence?"*—That question may be asked of us. Who can do this? Not the cleverest or most powerful man living. The man of science can do much. He can open the fields of sky to our gaze with a

telescope, and shew us other worlds than ours. He can make steam his slave, and compel it to bear the ship from one side of the world to the other. He can seize upon electricity and make it carry a message at his bidding. But the greatest man of science cannot make an ear of corn grow, nor an apple blossom swell into fruit. Kings can make laws to take away life, but they cannot give life, nor cause it to rain upon the earth, nor make the fields bring forth their increase. "From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread?" From whence? From heaven. And the one Man who can do this is the Man Christ Jesus, the God Christ Jesus.—*H. J. Wilmot Buxton.*

Ver. 11. *Asking a sign.*—Two striking instances from Rabbinic literature will shew that this demand of the Pharisees was in

accordance with their notions and practice. We read that, when a certain Rabbi was asked by his disciples about the time of Messiah's coming, he replied, "I am afraid that you will also ask me for a sign." When they promised they would not do so, he told them that the gate of Rome would fall and be rebuilt, and fall again, when there would not be time to restore it ere the Son of David came. On this they pressed him, despite his remonstrance, for "a sign," when this was given them—that the waters which issued from the cave of Paneias were turned into blood. Again, as regards "a sign from heaven," it is said that Rabbi Eliezer, when his teaching was challenged, successively appealed to certain "signs." First, a locust tree moved at his bidding one hundred, or, according to some, four hundred, cubits. Next, the channels of water were made to flow backwards; then the walls of the Academy leaned forward, and were only arrested at the bidding of another Rabbi. Lastly, Eliezer exclaimed, "If the law is as I teach, let it be proved from heaven!" when a voice fell from the sky, "What have ye to do with Rabbi Eliezer? for the Halakhah is as he teaches."

Ver. 12. *Difficult to explain truth to un-spiritual people.*—If a man paints a picture on canvas, gorgeous in colour as Titian could make it, and then gathers together a multitude of spectators, it is useless for him to undertake to explain to them that the colours are exquisite, and the reasons why they are so. If, as they stand and look at it, one, in behalf of the others, should ask, "Will you be kind enough to prove to us that those are exquisite colours?" he would say, probably with expletives, "If you cannot yourselves see what they are, I cannot explain it to you." If you play a magnificent overture to an audience, some of them say, "I would rather hear a ballad than that thing." Others have an appreciation of it. Men only hear what they are capable of hearing. Some men's ears enable them to appreciate only the lowest elements of music; and when the better parts are developed, these are nothing to them. If they do not like a beautiful symphony, they do not, and that is all you can say about it. It is not in them to like it. The eye cannot see anything which it is not organised to see. Tyndall shewed us that light, besides containing all those qualities which we supposed it contained, also had in it chemical qualities which no sense of ours could trace or comprehend. It was the first intimation I had that the universe is full of things which we are not organised to appreciate. Precisely this was implied by Christ when He said, substantially, to His adversaries, the educated people of His day who denied that He was Divine: "If you

were spiritually enlightened, you would recognise My high claim; you would perceive in My life and disposition the qualities of Divinity; and if you do not perceive them, it is because you have not the requisite perceiving power. The proof must always lie in the person who is reasoned with; and you have not the moral faculty which is necessary to enable you to discern it."—*H. W. Beecher.*

Vers. 22-25. *Sight obscured by the trivial.*—A silk thread stretched across the glass of the telescope will entirely cover a star, although as large as our sun. So there are some whose sight of the heavenly world is entirely obscured by what is infinitely little compared with the life of the world to come. Richardson, the blind man, used to say of his conversion, "I could never see till I was blind." The great Earl of Chatham once went with a friend to hear Mr. Cecil preach. The sermon was on the Spirit's agency in the hearts of believers. As they were coming from church, the great statesman confessed that he could not understand it at all, and asked his friend if he supposed that any one present did. "Why, yes," said he, "there were many plain, unlettered women, and some children there, who understood every word of it, and heard it with joy."

Ver. 27. *A striking coincidence.*—If we are right in identifying the little bay—Dalmanutha—with the neighbourhood of Tarichæa, yet another link of strange coincidence connects the prophetic warning spoken there with its fulfilment. From Dalmanutha our Lord passed across the lake to Cæsarea Philippi. From Cæsarea Philippi did Vespasian pass through Tiberias to Tarichæa, when the town and people were destroyed, and the blood of the fugitives reddened the lake, and their bodies choked its waters. Even amidst the horrors of the last Jewish war few spectacles could have been so sickening as that of the wild stand at Tarichæa, ending with the butchery of 6,500 on land and sea, and lastly the vile treachery by which they to whom mercy had been promised were lured into the circus at Tiberias, when the weak and old, to the number of about 1,200, were slaughtered, and the rest—upwards of 30,400—sold into slavery. Well might He who foresaw and foretold that terrible end, standing on that spot, deeply sigh in spirit as He spake to them who asked "a sign," and yet saw not what even ordinary discernment might have perceived of the red and lowering sky overhead.—*A. Eidersheim, D.D.*

Ver. 29. *Comprehensive news of Christ.*—Many have at one time or other felt the charm of a Christ who is purely human, but



not Divine. Our literature abounds at present with such pictures, and some of them are very fascinating. The Peasant of Nazareth, growing up beneath His mother's roof and in the carpenter's workshop; the enthusiastic Lover of the poor and oppressed, who went about continually doing good; the pure and fearless Reformer, who blasted with the lightning of His eloquence the Pharisee and the priest; the Martyr, who died for the truth, and lies buried beneath the Syrian blue,—this picture is being sketched by clever littérateurs; it is impossible not to enjoy it; and you ask, Why does this win me more than the Christ I hear of in church? The latter perplexes me with mystery, but this is simple, human, lovable. It is not, I think, difficult to explain this. If you know music, and have ever endeavoured to follow and grasp a long and classical composition of a great master, say, an oratorio of Handel or Haydn, I am sure you can remember in it a few airs and choruses which, if separated from the whole and executed by themselves, would produce far more immediate pleasure than the whole elaborate composition. Indeed, there are audiences which could not tolerate the oratorio as a whole, but would be delighted with its selected beauties. Yet, though these lovely morsels are enchanting, they are not Handel. Or, do you know literature? If you know your Browning, you must be aware how charming it is, after struggling through his more difficult pages, to light on a lyric here and there which is perfectly easy reading. Selections of these find their way even into school books, and many readers can enjoy selections from this great author who recoil from his longer and more difficult works. But though these elegant extracts are delightful, they are not Browning. In the same way these pictures of a merely human Christ are true as far as they go; they are the simpler traits selected from that great character and life; they are easy to comprehend, and they touch the feelings; but they are not Christ. At first sight that way of thinking of Christ as a great and good man appears to make everything simple; but it really involves you in confusion and contradiction. For what is it you hold Him to be? He is, you say, the ideal man—the model of modesty, wisdom, and truth. If He was merely a link in the chain of humanity, then, as a weak and fallible man, He ought to have confessed His own sins, and He was a blasphemer when He spoke of giving His life a ransom for many. When He said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth," and promised to be with His people always, even to the end of the world, He was not a wise man, but the victim of a madman's delusions. When He, a finite creature, spoke of Himself as seated on God's throne and

judging the assembled world, He was no model of goodness and modesty, but a man rendered insane with pride, who was presuming to pluck the sceptre from the hands of the Eternal. If He who said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," had not the peace and joy of salvation to give to those who come to hide their guilty heads in His bosom, then He was cruelly deceiving us all.—*Jas. Stalker, D.D.*

*A large Christ experienced.*—Payson, when he lay on his bed dying, said: "All my life Christ has seemed to me as a star afar off; but little by little He has been advancing and growing larger and larger, till now His beams seem to fill the whole hemisphere, and I am floating in the glory of God, wondering with unutterable wonder how such a mote as I should be glorified in His light." But he came to that after a long life.

Ver. 33. *We all have our Satans*—each one of us a different Satan. Satan comes to one man in the form of idleness, and makes him waste day after day, year after year, until he has wasted his whole life doing nothing. Satan comes to another man as work, and makes him destroy himself in the opposite way by wearing out prematurely his brain and his body. He comes to another as Christian zeal, and the man becomes a bigot, full of fire for the Lord; but the Lord whom he serves is a God of wrath, a God who cares for trifles, a God who prefers sacrifice to mercy. He comes to another as charity, but it is a charity which tolerates evil, and lets it alone, which has no edge to it, no courage—an indolent charity which is not love at all, but only easy good-nature. So he disguises himself as an angel of light, calling himself Patriotism when he wishes to make nations hate each other; calling himself Christianity when he wishes to make men persecute each other; calling himself Honesty when he wishes to encourage a man in his rude and overbearing ways; and so on, changing himself into every virtue and every grace.—*J. F. Clarke.*

Ver. 34. *To take up one's cross* was a proverbial expression, both with the Jews and Romans, for any extraordinary sufferings, and it is probable they had it from the Persians, who made use of that form of punishment.—*T. J. Montefiore.*

*The symbol of the cross.*—It is strange, yet well authenticated, and has given rise to many speculations, that the symbol of the cross was already known to the Indians before the arrival of Cortez. Among the Egyptians a cross was the emblem of a future life. In O'Brien's *Round Towers of Ireland* there are some curious remarks on the cross. The use of it in some way by the Druids is noticed.

*To take, not make, our cross.*—We are bid to *take*, not to *make*, our cross. God in His providence will provide one for us. And we are bid to *take it up*; we hear nothing of laying it down. Our troubles and our lives live and die together.—*W. Gurnall.*

*The spirit of the Christian soldier.*—When Garibaldi entered on one of his campaigns, he told his troops what he wanted of them. They replied, "Well, General, and what are you going to give us for all this?" He replied, "I don't know what also you will get, but you will get hunger, cold, wounds, and perhaps death." They stood awhile considering, and then, throwing up their arms, exclaimed, "We are the men!" This is the spirit Christ looks for in His soldiers.

*The spell of example.*—There is, we know, a wonderful spell in the cry, "Come after Me," "Follow Me." All history, profane as well as sacred, has shewn this. The great Roman general realised its force when he called to his soldiers, who shrank from the hardships of the Libyan desert, and promised to go before them, and to command them nothing which he would not first do himself. Even so Christ designed to help His followers by the assurance that He should first suffer that which they would be called to bear.

*Predominance of the cross.*—Describing the artistic glories of the Church of St. Mark at Venice, Mr. Ruskin says: "Here are all the successions of crowded imagery, shewing the passions and the pleasures of human life symbolised together, and the mystery of its redemption: for the maze of interwoven lines and changeful pictures lead always at last to the cross, lifted and carved in every place and upon every stone; sometimes with the serpent of eternity wrapped round it, sometimes with doves beneath its arms, and sweet herbage growing forth from its feet; but conspicuous most of all on the great rood that crosses the church before the altar, raised in bright blazonry against the shadow of the apse. It is the cross that is first seen and always burning in the centre of the temple; and every dome and hollow of its roof has the figure of Christ in the utmost height of it, raised in power, or returning in judgment."

*Christ's cross is the sweetest burden that ever I bore*; it is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my harbour.—*S. Rutherford.*

*The figure of the cross.*—My will is represented well by a straight line—thus, running from birth to death in unbroken current through the flesh and the world in all manner of self-indulgence unto the hidden abyss. God's will is represented by a perpendicular | thus, falling from heaven like a bolt of thunder. The two wills meet, and form the figure of the + thus. It cuts me, severs me, hinders me, clogs me, compels

me; but Thy will, O God, saves me. That cross means the life and death of the Son of God. "For me," therefore, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

*Christ the Leader.*—When Hedley Vicars fell at the head of his regiment during a night attack of the Russians, his voice was heard ringing out on the night air over the din of the conflict with the cry, "This way, Ninety-seventh." A hundred "goes" would be weak in comparison with the "come" involved in that battle-cry. In all the cross-bearing of life the voice of the Captain of our salvation is still heard in the van, saying, "This way, My disciple."

*Following Christ in self-denial.*—A little girl was instructed by her parents in what Christ had taught, and how He lived, and that through Him we must enter into eternal life. When she heard these things, she became dissatisfied with her native land, and pressed her parents to be taken to that land where men lived as Christ had taught them, and as He lived. Her parents replied that she was then in a Christian land, and that those around her were Christians, and were living so. She shook her head and said, "That I cannot believe, for those I see around me neither live as Christ taught nor as Christ lived; for Christ was voluntarily poor, we love gold and silver; He was humble and lowly, but we affect dominion and greatness; He was always in affliction, we hunt for carnal pleasures." What cutting truths from infant lips!

Ver. 35. *Gain by loss.*—The most important use of a seed is that which results in the reproduction of its species; but in order that it may serve this high purpose, it must lose itself as a seed, must suffer the disintegration of its structure, and give up its elements for the production of new forms of life. The seed must, as it were, lose all thought of itself, must give up its own life, its own separate existence, and allow itself to be converted into new and productive forms of vegetation. A grain of corn stored away in the granary is of small account. To be of any use in the world it must be either ground to powder and made into bread for the eater, or be planted in the ground and transmuted by the joint action of the wonderful forces locked up within itself and those lodged in the soil around it, into a green and growing stalk which shall in due time bear fruit to nourish human life and bless the world. It is only one illustration of a great law prevalent in all the universe of God. Helpfulness to others is attained through sacrifice of self.

*The reward of self-sacrifice.*—A group of firemen sat in their engine house to hold their anniversary. They have invited in the "veterans." They eat—they remember. Which is the keenest delight, the memory

of the terrible eight-and-forty hours in which you played the hero, carrying the nozzle through the doorway from which a hundred citizens had shrunk dismayed, or the present banquet? The pleasure of heroic deeds, or—a piece of pie? Yet here is all the difference between noble and ignoble men. When we come to think of it, self-sacrifice has its own high reward. But observe how slow we are to win it with the denial of an appetite. The cross of Christ is no esoteric secret. It inheres in the constitution of things, even the commonest things.—*E. J. Haynes.*

*Lost.*—I remember being one winter's night in a little town on the coast of Wales. We were sitting by the fire, cheerful, when we heard a sudden noise. We looked out into the night. The wind was very high, and suddenly we heard the scream of voices, then the boom of guns over the water; then the clatter of feet along the street, the lifeboat, and the lifebuoy. Human life in danger. We thought we desecrated a dark mass heaving over the black billows, but the breakers carried her away. That night she struck on the rocks. I walked down in the morning to look at her lying on the beach. I could not help saying, "How human this is! how lifelike!" There she lay, the pride and hope of her owners—stripped; masts, sails, shrouds, broken, ragged, torn—gone. And yet much had depended on her. She had been launched with many hopes and expectations. All gone, a melancholy wreck. The winds howled through as they lifted her ragged shrouds. She could not, as once she might have done, repel them, and make them her ministers. She was a lost ship. Melancholy type of a lost soul.—*E. Paxton Hood.*

Ver. 36. *Gained, but not possessed.*—A people may gain the whole world, and lose all those qualities of the head and heart which entitle them to possess it. May we not say of ancient Rome that she gained the whole world and lost her soul? Just as the tale of her conquests was almost complete, yet ere the Roman eagles were firmly planted on the Euphrates and on the Danube the soul of the old republic had departed. The temperance, courage, justice, patriotism, of the earlier Romans had died out; and while, in the intoxication of her victories, Rome grasped with one hand the sceptre of the world, she surrendered the liberties and lives of her citizens to the lusts and tyranny of the Cæsars with the other. A people may have been civilised, in the material sense of the word, for centuries, while it remains at heart and for ever barbarian. In ages when our ancestors were mere savages Chinese society was as highly organised, Chinese life as highly embellished, as at the present day. Yet

no primitive race was ever capable of the extraordinary cruelties which are now of daily occurrence in China; and the dignity and the rights of man are nowhere treated with such lofty scorn as in those tribunals which are presided over by the passionless scepticism of a Chinese mandarin. Without a ray of moral life, without a soul, that vast and ancient empire exists as if that it may exhibit to Christendom the worthlessness and feebleness of mere material progress. Yet Pagan empires are no measure of the degradation of which Christian peoples are capable when they sacrifice truth and goodness in an attempt to gain the world. When during the first French Revolution divine honours were paid to one of the daughters of shame, throned on the high altar of the cathedral church of Paris, while the streets of that brilliant capital were deluged with the best blood of its citizens, men read God's doom upon a noble people, bent fiercely for the moment upon spiritual suicide and upon material aggrandisement. And when we hear daily of the gigantic miseries inflicted and endured by a nation which but yesterday was a British colony, we may reflect that there are dangers against which no institutions or races can be guaranteed, and that we ourselves have our weaknesses and our temptations. My countrymen, I do not dispute your pre-eminence; you are unquestionably the princes of commerce, you reign without a rival over the realm of matter: but have you lost, or are you losing, that which is more precious than any acquisitions of your industry or of your genius—are you becoming the slaves of matter instead of its masters? Beneath the surface of many an advanced civilisation the human brute crouches, he scarcely slumbers, with the old untamed ferocity of his savage nature; and not merely the accumulations of your capital, but the creations of your science, your new projectiles, your rifled cannon, and your iron-clad steam vessels, may but enable the nation which has gained the world to prove one day how much she has really lost in gaining it.—*Canon Liddon.*

*The world unsatisfying.*—Alexander the Great overran the whole earth, and subdued every nation; and at the conclusion of universal victory he sat down and wept like a child because he had not another world to conquer. We read also of a Roman emperor who had run the round of all the pleasures in the world offering a rich reward to any one who should discover a new pleasure. Cyrus the conqueror thought that for a little time he was making a fine thing out of this world; yet before he came to his grave he wrote out this pitiful epitaph for his monument: "I am Cyrus. I occupied the Persian Empire. I was King over Asia. Be-grudge me not this monument." But the world



in after-years ploughed up his sepulchre. Pope Adrian VI. had this inscription on his monument: "Here lies Adrian VI., who was never so unhappy in any period of his life as at that in which he was a prince." "I, sinful wretch, by the grace of God, King of England and of France, and Lord of Ireland, bequeath to Almighty God my sinful soul and the life I have misspent, whereof I put myself wholly at His grace and mercy"—so wrote Henry IV. in his last will, when the frightful reality of leprosy had disenchanted the rapturous dream of usurpation. Queen Elizabeth, dying, cried: "Millions of money for an inch of time!" Was the gay queen happy? The history of kings and queens proves that though their crowns may be "set with diamonds or Indian stones," the kings and queens themselves but seldom enjoy the crown of content which is worn upon the heart. The world clapped its hands and stamped its feet in honour of Charles Lamb. Was he happy? He says: "I walk up and down, thinking I am happy, but feeling I am not." Samuel Johnson, happy? "No. I am afraid I shall some day get crazy." Buchanan, the world-renowned writer, exiled from his own country, appealing to Henry VIII. for protection, happy? "No. Over mountains covered with snow, and through valleys flooded with rain, I come a fugitive." "Indeed, my lord," wrote famous Edmund Burke, "I doubt whether, in these hard times, I would give a peck of refuse wheat for all that is called fame in the world." "Sweet," says the poet, "sweet were the days when I was all unknown;

But when my name was lifted up, the storm

Broke on the mountain, and I cared not for it."

Man's soul thirsts and longs for something nobler, brighter, greater, and better than the world itself. As Macduff says: "As well try to fill the yawning chasm with a few grains of sand as satisfy the gulf of the soul's desires with the pleasures of an empty world." Nothing can satisfy the soul but God.

*A revealing light.*—A traveller who crosses the Alps by night sees only a foot or two before him; and he is as little alive to the extraordinary scene through which he is passing, to the beauties which encompass and to the risks which beset his path, as if he were walking quietly along the turnpike road from London to Cambridge. But as the early dawn breaks upon him, he becomes aware of those mountain pinnacles which tower above him till they hide their snow-capped summits in the very clouds of heaven; he sees the precipice which yawns at his very feet; he becomes conscious of dangers of which he had previously no idea; and he is grateful to the morning light which cer-

tainly has discovered to him a vision of unsuspected beauty, and which probably has saved him from an untimely death. And what is the question of our Blessed Lord in the text, but the very light of heaven itself, bringing out into sharp relief the real conditions of our personal existence!

*The worth of a soul.*—We know the force and majesty of the thoughts of Pascal. The realms of space and the worlds in them are full of grandeur in his philosophy; but there is one thing compared with which all this vast material universe is nothing. "All the bodies, the stars, the firmament, the earth and all its kingdoms, are not worth one soul; for that soul knows both itself and them, and they know nothing."

*The soul the chief concern.*—When the steamer *London* was lost some years ago on the English coast, among the many sad tales told in connexion with the shipwreck, I recollect reading of one in some respects the saddest of all. When the condition of the ship was hopeless, one of the passengers had gone down to his cabin, which was already under water, and had with some difficulty found his trunk, which he had carried up to the deck. The captain, who was standing by, waiting in silence for the inevitable catastrophe, took his head as he saw what the poor man had done. He had saved his trunk; his life would be gone in a moment.

*What then?*—An aged Christian once asked a young man who was just entering business and laying out his plans for life, "What are you going to do? You are about to settle in business, I understand." "Yes." "And what do you intend then?" "I shall marry." "And what then?" "I hope to make a fortune." "And what then?" "I shall enter public life." "And what then?" "I hope that I may make a family reputation." "And what then?" "Well, I suppose I shall grow old and die." "And what then?" The young man was silent. He had never looked so far ahead.

*The legend of Ninus.*—There is a legend of Ninus, the monarch of Assyria, that he had an ocean of gold and riches more than the sand of the Caspian Sea, but that he never offered sacrifice, nor worshipped God, nor administered justice—in a word, he spent a life of selfishness and indulgence with no sense of accountability to God or man. "This man is dead," says the old chronicler, "Behold his sepulchre; and now hear where Ninus is" (he is supposed to be speaking from his tomb). "Sometime I was Ninus and drew the breath of a living man, but now I am nothing but clay; I have nothing but what I served to myself in lust—that was and is all my portion. The wealth with which I was blessed mine enemies shall bear away. I am gone to Tartarus, and when I went thither I neither carried gold

nor horse nor chariot. I that wore a crown am now a little leap of dust."

*Not much left.*—It is said of Saladin, also called the Great, that just before he gave his last sigh he called the herald who had carried his banner before him in all his battles, and commanded him to fasten to the top of a lance the shroud in which he was so soon to be buried. "Go," said he, "unfurl the banner, and whilst you lift up this standard proclaim, 'Saladin the mighty monarch is gone, and has taken no more with him than what you see.'"

*As in life, so in death.*—There is a story of one that, being often reproved for his ungodly and vicious life, and exhorted to repentance, would still answer that it was but saying three words at his death, and he was sure to be saved. Perhaps the three words he meant were, *Miserere mei Deus* ("God, have mercy on me"). But one day riding over a bridge, his horse stumbled, and both were falling into the river, when in the moment of that precipitation he only cried, *Capiat omnia diabolus* ("Horse and man and all to the devil"). Three words he had, but not such as he should have had. He had been so familiar with the devil all his life that he thinks of none else at his death. Thus it usually is, that a wicked life hath a wicked end. He that travels the way of hell all his lifetime, it is impossible in the end of the journey he should arrive at heaven. A worldly man dies rather thinking of his gold than his God. Some die jeering, some raging; some in one distemper, some in another way. They lived so, and so they die.

*Crushed by gold.*—When Rome was besieged, it is said of the daughter of its ruler that she saw the golden bracelets on the arms of the enemy, and sent word to them that she would betray her city and deliver it into their hands if they would give her their bracelets. They readily accepted her proposition, and before sunset the daughter had secretly opened one of the gates to the city, and as the enemy entered they threw upon her their golden bracelets, and also their shields, until the great weight crushed her to death. How many poor souls to-day are striving to gain that which will in the end prove the means of their soul's destruction!

*Much lost for little.*—When Lysimachus was engaged in a war with the Getæ, he was so tormented by thirst that he offered his kingdom to his enemies for permission to quench it. His exclamation, when he had drunk the water with which they furnished him, is striking. "Ah, wretched me, who for such a momentary gratification have lost so great a kingdom!" How applicable is this to the case of those who for the momentary pleasures of sin part with the kingdom of heaven!

*The folly of sacrificing eternity to time.*—When Sir Thomas More was in prison, his

wife and children entreated him to yield to the king. "For so many years," said his wife, "we might yet live together: why then can you, in the flower of your age, bring yourself and our family to the worst misfortunes?" "How many years," said he, "do you suppose I can yet live?" "At least twenty," said she. "What a foolish exchange," exclaimed the Chancellor, "for twenty years of life here below, and very likely not so much, that I should give up life eternal and condemn myself to endless torments! Better lose all than my soul: for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

Ver. 37. *The value of a soul.*—It was doubtless when standing in full view of the niched rock cut by Greeks for the idol Pan, face to face with the lustrous marble temple to "divine Augustus" of the Romans at Cæsarea Philippi, that Christ said, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" To Him belonged this costly adoration, squandered at the feet of idols; and He is a jealous God. There before His very eyes were the tokens of a false love. Jealousy in the purest woman's heart, at sight of love-tokens bestowed upon another which were rightfully her own, is a severe, a biting thing, killing the one, or the two, or the three. Observe how poor and inadequate a thing is our English word "jealousy" with which to portray the Divine emotion. Our Blessed Lord laments over the value of a soul whose devotion is snatched from Himself; loves it all the more; condemns it with the unspeakable condemnation of wounded love; asks, "Once lost, what shall man give in exchange, to get it back again?" His "jealousy" drives Him to the Cross, that He may win His own again—the love of a priceless human soul. Let human jealousy learn a lesson. Lift yourself up on a cross, that you may draw unto yourself the heart you think you have lost.—*E. J. Haynes.*

Ver. 38. *Confession of Christ.*—In his *Confessions* St. Augustine relates a story of Victorinus, an eminent man at Rome, who had won the respect of a large number of his countrymen, among whom were many heathen. When the Spirit of God dawned upon his heart, and the light of Christ therein shone, he went direct to one of his friends, and told him that he was a Christian. The friend replied, "I will never believe it until I see you openly profess your new faith in the church." This text came to him with such force that he went back with his friend, and boldly and openly confessed Christ as his Saviour.

*Confession of Christ.*—A Roman emperor said to a Greek architect, "Build me a colosseum, a grand colosseum, and if it suits me I will crown you in the presence of all

the people, and I will make a great day of festival on your account." The architect did his work—did it magnificently, planned the building, and looked after its construction. The building was finished, the opening day arrived, the emperor and the architect were in the colosseum. Amid loud cheers the emperor arose and announced that the day was set apart in honour of the Greek architect, and everything must be done to his honour. "Let us make merry and enjoy ourselves; bring out those Christians, and let us see the lions destroy them." A group of imprisoned Christians were led forth, and a number of half-starved lions turned loose among them. They were soon devoured, and the architect slowly arose, and in a firm though gentle voice said, "I too am a Christian." The howling mob seized him and flung him to the fierce beasts, who soon tore his limbs from his body. This is confession, true and undefiled. It is easy enough to confess Christ before our own Church and friends, but do we confess Him among those that revile Him? Do we go among men that despise His precepts, and by our very life tell of Him? If we do not, we do not do our duty as His followers.

*Confession of Christ unknown to nominal Christians.*—A Hindoo of rank was troubled in his conscience on the subject of a future state. He had heard of Christians, and longed to converse with them about their religion, and to know who Christ was. So he visited England, the Christians' land, supplied with introductions to some leading people. Being asked to a great dinner, he turned to his neighbour in the course of conversation, and said, "Can you tell me something about Christ, the founder of your religion?" "Hush," replied his new ac-

quaintance, "we do not speak of such things at dinner-parties." Subsequently he was invited to a large ball. Dancing with a young and fashionable lady, he took an opportunity of asking her who the founder of her religion, Jesus Christ, was. And again he was warned that a ball was no place to introduce such subjects. Strange, thought the Hindoo, are these Christians in England. They will not speak of their religion, nor inform me about Christ, its founder.

*No silent partners.*—"I come, sir," said a business man to a minister of the gospel, "to ask if Jesus Christ will take me into the firm as a silent partner." The reply was, "Jesus Christ takes no silent partners; the firm must be 'Jesus Christ & Co.,' and the names of the 'Co.,' though they may occupy a subordinate place, must all be written out on the signboard."

*Power of confession.*—In relating his experience during the Peninsular War, Captain Watson says: "I was nominated to sit on a garrison court-martial. A number of officers of different ranks and regiments were present on the occasion, and before the proceedings commenced some of them indulged in loose and sceptical observations. 'Alas,' thought I, 'here are many not ashamed to speak openly for their master, and shall I hold my peace and refrain when the honour and cause of Him who has had mercy on me are called in question?' I looked for wisdom and assistance from on high, and I was enabled to speak for a quarter of an hour in a way that astonished my hearers and myself. The Lord was pleased to give what I said a favourable reception, and not another improper word was uttered by them during my stay in that room."

## CHAPTER IX.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 2. **Transfigured.**—A strong word, implying that the change was not due to any external influence, but proceeded from Christ's own inner being. "While the form of our Lord remained the same, the fashion of that form underwent a change. His whole sacred Person seemed to be living with light—light flashing outward from within, and rendering luminous and bright in unspeakable glory His face and form and dress."

Ver. 3. **Omit as snow.** The Evangelists seem to vie with one another in their efforts to depict the splendour and brilliancy of this "golden link in the iron chain that bound our Lord's career." Cp. Matt. xvii. 2; Luke ix. 29; see also John i. 14; 1 John i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 16.

Ver. 12. See R.V. for punctuation. **Set at nought.**—*Treated as a nonentity.*

Ver. 31. **Is delivered.**—*Is being delivered.* The last stage of His ministry, which was to culminate in His threefold "delivery"—the Father's surrender of the Son, the Son's surrender of Himself, and His betrayal by Judas—had now set in.



Ver. 35. **If any man desire.**—*If any one wishes*, as chap. viii. 34.

Vers. 42-47. **Offend.**—*Lay a trap for*. See on chap. vi. 3.

Ver. 42. **It is better for him.**—*A happy thing it is for him rather*. Cp. 1 Cor. ix. 15.

Vers. 44, 46. Probably spurious.

Ver. 47. **Hell fire.**—*The Gehenna*. "The Ravine of Hinnom," also called "Topheth" (2 Kings xxiii. 10; Isa. xxx. 33), is described in Josh. xviii. 16 as on the south of Mount Zion. Total length a mile and a half. A deep retired glen, shut in by rugged cliffs, bleak mountain-sides rising over all. Scene of barbarous rites of Molech and Chemosh in times of Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Kings xvi. 3; 2 Chron. xxviii. 3; Jer. vii. 31); in consequence of which it was polluted by Josiah (2 Kings xxiii. 10, 13, 14); from which time it seems to have become the common cesspool of the city. These inhuman rites and subsequent ceremonial defilements caused the later Jews to regard it with horror and detestation, and they applied the name given to the valley to *the place of torment*.—*G. F. Maclear, D.D.*

Ver. 48. Quoted from Isa. lxvi. 24. The words are not to be taken to mean more here than they do there.

Ver. 49. **Salted with fire.**—Explanatory of the words immediately preceding. Either here on earth, or else hereafter in the Gehenna, all the impurities and imperfections of our fallen nature must be burnt out by the cleansing fires of discipline and chastisement, in order that we may become an acceptable sacrifice unto God. **Salted with salt.**—It is Divine grace alone—and not in any sense our own merits—that makes us "a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice." This second clause of ver. 49 is probably an early marginal gloss.

Ver. 50. Here there seems to be a transition of thought from the Divine Source to the human receptacles of grace. Our Lord is speaking to "the twelve" (ver. 35), whom He has already styled, as His disciples, "the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13). He now warns them against the tendency to factiousness and self-seeking, which, if indulged, will thwart all their efforts to purify the world. And then He winds up, "Entertain among yourselves the spiritual salt of self-repression and self-discipline, and be at peace with one another."

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 2—13.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xvii. 1-13; LUKE ix. 28-36.)

*The Transfiguration.* Unlike other prominent events in Christ's life, the Transfiguration finds no place in the ordinary cycle of art representations in the early Church. It is represented emblematically in mosaics of the sixth and eighth centuries, but it was reserved for Raphael's genius to portray it in a worthy manner. His noble picture in the Vatican was the apotheosis of his art; but death snatched the brush from his hand before it was finished, as if Providence would teach us that no human art or genius, tongue or pen, can sufficiently and completely portray that sublime spectacle.

1. **The scene.** It was when the Master was in the neighbourhood of Casarea Philippi, far away in the north of Palestine, that the event occurred. To any one visiting the spot, and seeing the stupendous form of snowy Hermon rising before him, till its summit has left the valley eleven thousand feet below, it appears almost certain, it is said, that this was the high mountain to which the Saviour led His chosen disciples. Through a scene of surpassing loveliness they wend their way. At every step the prospect expands, till at length a glorious panorama opens before them, "embracing a great part of Syria, from the sea to Damascus, from the Lebanon and the gorge of the Litany to the mountains of Moab; or down the Jordan valley to the Dead Sea; or over Galilee and Samaria, and on to Jerusalem," all bathed in the splendours of the setting sun. But these sunset glories presently fade. Night falls. The stars one by one shine forth. The moon rises in silvery radiance, reflected back in dazzling beauty from the broad patches of snow on the mountain-side. And now we see Jesus bowed in prayer in the moonlight, His disciples praying with Him a short distance apart, till, overcome by fatigue, they sink in slumber. But what sudden light is that which bursts forth upon the scene, hiding by its dazzling brilliancy all the glories of the moonlit night? The disciples are

wakened by the splendour, and their astonished eyes behold a marvellous sight. Jesus is transfigured before them. His face shines with the brightness of the noonday sun; His raiment is white and glistening; and as they gaze in a transport of awe, behold! two shining forms appear with Him in glory, whom they, by the intuition which is given to the spirit in moments of ecstasy, recognise to be none other than Moses and Elias. The apostles gaze in wonder and adoration, till presently there comes a bright cloud, which enwraps in its folds of light the three figures. It is the Shechinah, and the apostles fear as they see the face of Christ and the faces of Moses and Elias disappearing within it. And now from out that cloud of awful glory comes a voice, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him."

**II. Its purpose.**—1. It was intended to strengthen and brace the spirit of Jesus Christ for the solemn and awful work which lay before Him, culminating in Gethsemane and Calvary. 2. As regards the purpose of the Transfiguration with reference to Moses and Elias, it is difficult to speak with any degree of positiveness. Remembering, however, what St. Peter tells us, that the angels bend over the mystery of redemption as the cherubin bent over the mercy-seat on the ark, desiring "to look into" its secret meaning, we may infer that glorified saints, such as Moses and Elias, must have felt the most earnest and absorbing desire to understand the mystery of the atonement which Christ was about to make for their sins and for the sins of the whole world. For them the Transfiguration must have been a new revelation of the wisdom and glory of God, in the consummation of His eternal purpose to redeem a ruined world. 3. So far as the three apostolic witnesses of the Transfiguration were concerned, its intent is perfectly clear. They could not grasp the conception of a suffering Messiah. It was an offence to them. So they are taken up into the Holy Mount, and shewn the great lawgiver and the great prophet of Israel engaged in ecstatic converse with their glorified Master concerning the decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. The lesson was plain; they had misread the prophecies: the Messiah of Moses and the prophets must be a suffering, dying Messiah. And this Jesus, whom they are almost ready to forsake, because He tells them He is to die the shameful death of the Cross, God the Father, on the Mount of Transfiguration, crowns with honour and glory.

**III. Its significance.**—1. It marks the topmost step in the progressive glorification of the manhood of Jesus Christ. He rose to that height of glory because of the inner power of His holy life, because of the transfiguring virtue of His consecrated soul. The doors of eternal glory open before the Son of Man: He has only to enter in, to step up from the summit of Hermon into the presence of God Himself, and to sit down in glory for ever! But He puts aside this possible glorification; He leaves all that glory which He might have had with the angels of God and the glorified saints, and descends into the valley of humiliation, into this desert of sin and sorrow and suffering, into the dark and gloomy depths of Gethsemane and Calvary, in order to redeem a world! 2. It may be looked upon as the inauguration of the New Covenant. As on rugged Sinai was inaugurated the law which proved a ministration of death, so on snowy Hermon, amid a scene of exquisite natural beauty, was inaugurated the gospel by that voice from the excellent glory. God proclaims Him the Head and Lord of all. "HEAR YE HIM." You have heard and obeyed Moses, you have heard and obeyed the prophets: now hear and obey Christ the Son of God. 3. It represents to us the investiture of Jesus Christ as High Priest. From this point on to the end Christ's prophetic office appears to recede more and more, while His priestly office comes into prominence. From Hermon He descended into the valley of humiliation, and moved right on to the altar of sacrifice, even His Cross on Calvary. 4. It is above all designed to exhibit to us

the transcendent value of the sufferings and death of Christ. In the Basilica at Ravenna there is a mosaic of the sixth century representing in emblematical form the Transfiguration of Christ, a jewelled cross set in a circle of blue studded with golden stars, in the midst of which appears the face of Christ, the Saviour of the world; while from the cloud close by is thrust forth a Divine hand that points to the Cross. Those early artists were right in their reading of this sublime event. The Transfiguration sets the Cross of Christ in the centre, surrounds it with a radiant firmament of God's promises and of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and shews us the hand of God Himself emerging from the cloud of glory and pointing to the Cross, as though God the Father would say to man what John the Baptist said: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." 5. Its prophetic significance. Standing on Hermon with these three apostles, a long vista stretches out before us into the distant future, including in its scope that great day when the Son of God shall take to Himself His power, His mighty power, in order to reign. His kingdom has come at last; and what is the manner of it? It is a kingdom of redeemed men—of men who stand like Moses and Elias with Christ in glory, not only redeemed, not only delivered from sin and suffering and sorrow and trial and pain, but transformed and transfigured with that same glory by which the person of Jesus is enwrapped. 6. It symbolises the transformation and transfiguration of our spirits, our whole reasonable, moral, and spiritual nature, into the image of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Lessons.**—1. If we desire to behold the glory of the transfigured Redeemer, we must climb with Him the mount of prayer. 2. The metamorphic, transfiguring power of a life of prayer. I have seen the face of a dying servant of Christ lit up, whether by a light from the unseen world, or by a radiance shining out from within, I could not tell; but in either case it was a kind of transfiguration which only those attain who have been often with Jesus on the mountain-top of prayer. 3. Consecration to the path of suffering is the preparation for transfiguration. 4. The true relation of the contemplative to the active life. We cannot spend our lives on the mountain-top of vision, or of ecstasy, or of contemplation. The voice of God calls us down to grapple with the problems and the duties which wait on every side. Sin is here; sorrow is here; darkness is here; unbelief is here. If God has revealed to us the glory of His Son, it is not that we should give our lives up to its contemplation, but that we should gain thereby inspiration and strength to tread the path of duty or of suffering—that we should consecrate ourselves to the work of lightening the darkness, and lessening the suffering, and cleansing the defilement of the world in which we live. —*R. H. McKim, D.D.*

Ver. 5. "*It is good for us to be here.*"—We need not inquire too closely what thoughts were uppermost in the apostle's mind when he said this. If asked, he could not perhaps have told himself. He was not himself. Suddenly waking out of sleep (Luke ix. 32), he and his fellow-disciples found themselves the amazed spectators of a vision of glory for the contemplation of which neither their minds nor their bodily organs were framed. All that we can certainly infer from this involuntary exclamation of Peter's is that his mind was cast into a pleasurable frame, so blissful that he longed for its continuance.

**I. The state of mind which gave rise to this exclamation.**—1. It was the acknowledgment of a present good. Peter felt himself happy, and at once avowed it. He looked neither backwards nor forwards; he saw no more than what was before his eyes. The narrow plot of ground on which he and his companions lay, and so much more as would suffice to erect three tabernacles upon, was then all the world to him. Such moments and such feelings were



rarely granted to those who shared the human condition of the Son of God. At other times they said not, "It is good," but "When will it be good?" (Matt. xix. 27). When the past supplies nothing but painful recollections, and the present nothing but painful experiences, it is our duty to look forward and to inquire, When will our happiness begin? But when we are happy, it is equally our duty to be sensible of it—to feel it, enjoy it, dwell upon it. Let us cherish such moments as the oases of this life. This applies especially to things spiritual. As "the elect of God, holy and beloved," possessing "the firstfruits of the Spirit," we ought to "abound in hope," "with all joy and peace in believing." 2. Happiness depends upon the state of the feelings. "It is good for us to be here," says Peter. What! good to have nowhere to lay one's head? good to be out all night in a bleak desert place, without shelter or food? good to be far from home, lost to the world and to the endearing relations of family life? This is all true, would Peter have replied, but it is all beside the mark. Happiness or wretchedness is in the mind (Prov. xiv. 10). Outward circumstances can only influence our happiness by acting upon our feelings. Let us look well, then, to our inward frames, and watch over the thoughts which arise in our minds (Prov. iv. 23). 3. Peter here mistook a mere transitory frame for a permanent state of mind. He said, "It is good for us to be here," and so far he was right; but his thoughts went further than this; he said in his heart, It would be good for us to be always here—to gaze for ever on "the King in His beauty." The same feeling made the apostles dread our Lord's departure; but He shews them that there is a higher "good" dependent on it (John xvi. 6, 7). So we too have our short-lived and occasional frames as well as our general and permanent *states* of mind; and we are in danger of mistaking one for the other. (1) In regard to temporal gratifications. When we find ourselves in some unusually agreeable and enjoyable situation, does not our vain heart unconsciously suggest to us, Would that I were always so! Oh that to-morrow might be as this day, and still more abundant!—forgetting that it is the nature of such delicious moments to be *but moments*; that these pleasures would lose half their sweetness if they did not come and go—just shew themselves and disappear. (2) In respect to spiritual delights. If you possess any religious sensibility, if you ever commune with your own heart, if you have any experience of prayer, if you ever long to see the Divine power and glory as you have seen them in the sanctuary,—if in any of these ways you have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," you will understand. At such moments has not the thought of your heart been—Vain world, adieu! It is good for us to be always so! Such is the language of nature; but let us beware how we listen to it. Cherish such moments; acknowledge them; be grateful for them; enjoy them while they last; but do not think of "building tabernacles for them." They were never meant to dwell with the tumult of the world or the sober realities of life. Even as spiritual refreshments they are not so good for us as many other fruits which hang from the less elevated branches of the tree of life. The true "peace of God which passeth all understanding" is not that which goes out of the heart, but that which stays in it, and "keeps as with a garrison the heart and mind of its possessor, through Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7).

## II. Some common occasions in life to which the words of the text apply. —

1. "It is good for us to be *here*"—in the house of God. Here we may by faith "behold His glory." Moses and Elias, the law and the prophets, those lesser lights and glories of which the meridian is past, still appear, as tributary to His brightness, like stars lingering after the sun is risen. And although "no man hath seen God at any time," yet in His Word and Sacraments we behold, if not the Divinity itself, at least the bright overshadowing cloud which

at once veils and indicates the Divine Presence. 2. "It is good for us to be" in the house of affliction (Eccles. vii. 2, 3). Who that believes this would not take the wings of a dove and fly from that mirth whose end is heaviness to that heaviness whose fruit is holiness? 3. "It is good for us to be" in this mixed and chequered world. There is nothing to hinder us from conceiving a world without pain, or a world without sorrow, or a world without sin; nor from wishing that our own lot were cast there. But however such imaginary systems might be suited to their respective inhabitants, let us be assured of this, that it is good for *us* to be where we are. Only consider *what* we are: men, sinful men, mortal men—each undergoing his separate trial—all moving on to eternity. To place such beings, with such a design, in a perfect and unmixed state of existence would be absurd. The longer we live in the world, the firmer shall we hold by this principle, that "whatever is, is best." What a blessing it is, *e.g.*, that we are not all rich, or all poor, or all midway between the two. Such a dead level would extinguish some of the noblest and holiest feelings of the human heart, besides annihilating half the duties and all the charities of life. Or would you banish pain and sorrow from the world? But that, were it possible, would be the reverse of a boon, since "sweet are the uses of adversity," etc. The same line of argument applies to differences in age, temperament, knowledge, etc.

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 2. "*After six days.*"—Why did Christ defer the performance of His promise for six days? He deferred it to increase their desires before it came, their joys when it came. To inflame their desires; for things easily come by are little set by. To increase their joys; for that which hath been long detained is at last more sweetly obtained. Moreover, if Christ after the promise of this vision had immediately singled out some to the participation of it, this would have bred envy and grudging in the rest.—*Thos. Adams.*

*Christ always better than His word.*—It was after six days. He stayed no longer. Why? He might have deferred longer. It was in these terms that He promised—before they die. Time enough therefore hereafter. Indeed for us, if we promise anything to God before we die, we must do it presently, because we know not the time of our death. As the Rabbins say, if a man vowed to be a Nazarite one day before his death, he was to be so presently, because this day may be the last day. But God knows these times and seasons, and the number of our days. What then? Yet after six days He performs

it. In all His promises He is better and fuller and speedier than His word.—*Bishop Brownrigg.*

*The first week of suffering on the part of the disciples*, previous to the sufferings of the Lord Himself. 1. Its beginning: the confession of Peter and the announcement of the Lord's sufferings. 2. Its employment: familiarising their minds with thoughts of the Cross. 3. Its close: a glorious Sabbath on the Holy Mount.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*The three chosen apostles.*—1. Peter was the forward, zealous disciple, who led the way to the rest in that noble confession of Christ; therefore he is singled out to be partaker of this vision. Again, Peter is now overtaken with an error, is sorry to hear of Christ's death, dissuades Him from it; by this vision therefore he is comforted, reformed, instructed in the mystery of Christ's death and passion. 2. James was appointed to be the first apostle that should die for Christ: Herod sucked his blood first. As they who must be in the front of the battle have the choicest armour because they are to undertake desperate services, so because James was to be the first

in the army royal therefore he was admitted to view the glory of this Transfiguration. 3. John was fore-appointed to be the publisher and penman of Christ's Divinity; and so above all he soared highest into heaven. Therefore was this manifestation of Christ's glory and Divinity made to him. He urges it (John i. 14).—*Bishop Brownrigg.*

*Why these three?*—We cannot for a moment imagine that there was favouritism in the selection of certain apostles to share in what the others might not witness. It was not because these were better loved, but because they were better prepared—more fully receptive, more readily acquiescing, more entirely self-surrendering.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

*What mountain?*—1. According to an old tradition Christ had left Caesarea Philippi, and the scene of the Transfiguration was Mount Tabor. But (1) there is no notice of His departure, such as is generally made by Mark; (2) on the contrary, it is mentioned by him as after the Transfiguration (ix. 30); (3) Tabor was at that time crowned by a fortified city, which would render it unsuitable for such a scene. 2. Modern opinion fixes upon one of the southern peaks of Hermon—the only “high mountain” in Palestine—as the place.

*Mountains.*—The devil took Christ into a mountain when he shewed Him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. So our Saviour took His apostles up into a mountain when He shewed them the kingdom of heaven and glory of the world to come. Moses went up to a mountain to speak with the Lord; now the Lord goes up to a mountain to speak with Moses.—*Thos. Adams.*

*Hermon.*—It was meet that Hermon should be chosen for this high honour, whose hoary head rose among the other hills, wreathed with the white shroud of eternal snow. Just as in human life snow-white locks are ever a mark of honour and command respect and reverence, so in the world

of nature the hoary mountain, grey with years and white with the snows of many ages, ever commands respect among its fellows, rising high overhead—a Saul among the people—its wreath of perpetual snow being at once a proof of its great age and great height among the neighbouring hills.—*W. F. Low.*

*Consecration to the Lord changes man.*—1. Internally; he is elevated into the spiritual world and surrounded by blessed spirits. 2. Externally; he is renewed, adorned, transfigured.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*Transfiguration.*—If our previous investigations have rightly led us up to this result, that Jesus was the Very Christ of God, then this event can scarcely be described as miraculous—at least in such a history. If we would not expect it, it is certainly that which might have been expected. 1. It was, and at that particular period, a necessary stage in the Lord's history, viewed in the light in which the Gospels present Him. 2. It was needful for His own strengthening, even as the ministry of the angels after the Temptation. 3. It was “good” for these three disciples to be there—not only for future witness, but for present help, and also with special reference to Peter's remonstrance against Christ's death-message. 4. The Voice from heaven, coming after the announcement of His Death and Passion, sealed that testimony, and in view of it proclaimed Him as the Prophet to whom Moses had bidden Israel hearken, while it repeated the heavenly utterance concerning Him made at His Baptism. 5. For us all the interest of this history lies not only in the past; it is in the present also, and in the future. To all ages it is like the vision of the bush burning, in which was the Presence of God. And it points us forward to that transformation, of which that of Christ was the pledge, when “this corruptible shall put on incorruption.” As of old the beacon fires, lighted from hill to hill, announced to them far away from Jerusalem the advent of solemn feast,



so does the glory kindled on the Mount of Transfiguration shine through the darkness of the world and tell of the Resurrection Day.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

*Prayer accompanied by glory.*—Luke gives a pregnant hint in connecting it with Christ's praying, as if the calm ecstasy of communion with the Father brought to the surface the hidden glory of the Son. Can it be that such glory always accompanied His prayers, and that its presence may have been one reason for the sedulous privacy of these, except on this one occasion, when He desired that His faithful three should be "eye-witnesses of His majesty"?—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 3. *Christ in glory.*—Look upon all the beauties that are in the world, the most glorious and resplendent creatures, and unite all their excellences, and raise up thy thoughts by them, and from them to the contemplation of that glory which is in heaven. View the curious rarities of art and nature. Is the snow, a vanishing meteor, so white? the material heavens so pure? the lily so beautiful? Oh! our Solomon in His glory is clothed more richly than any of these. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, the heart cannot conceive the greatness of His glory.—*Bishop Brownrigg.*

Ver. 4. *Why did Moses and Elias appear*, rather than David and Abraham, from whose loins Jesus came, and who were so famous among the people? 1. To manifest a difference between the Lord and the servants. Moses and Elias were of high esteem with the Jews, Christ not regarded, a man of no repute among them; therefore He would now shew that He was the Lord and they but His servants. 2. If it be granted that Moses was dead and that Elias died not, this declares that Christ is the Saviour of both quick and dead. 3. Moses was called the law-giver, and Elias was (after a sort) the law-restorer; now the Jews traduced Christ for a law-breaker. Moses

and Elias were witness that He was obedient to the law. 4. They meet that brought the law with Christ who brought the gospel, to shew that law and gospel must be joined together. We must still serve God according to His law, or He will not save us according to His gospel. 5. To shew that this was the true Messiah, to whom both law and prophets bare witness. 6. Christ proposed two such famous men as Moses and Elias to His apostles for patterns, that their spirits might be well tempered in them. Moses, a man most meek on the earth; Elias, a man exceeding zealous. These two are brought hither, that the apostles may learn to mix Moses' meekness with Elias' ferventness.—*Thos. Adams.*

*Christ the centre.*—All true teachers of duty and all inspired witnesses for God are found at last commending and adoring Christ. And all that is good fits into the gospel and helps to prepare its way. 1. Man, like the Son of Man, has latent glory which the presence of God brings out. 2. Obey God, and the glorified befriend you. 3. The Cross of Christ is not the weak point in the gospel, but its grandest feature—that into which the glorified desire to look.—*R. Glover.*

*The consecration of Jesus to His suffering and dying* by a visit from the dwellers of heaven. 1. Necessary, on account of His true humanity. 2. Fitting, on account of the high momentousness of the event. 3. Of great value for the disciples, as well then as afterwards. 4. Continually important for the Christian world of following centuries.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*

*The meeting of the Lord with Moses and Elijah* shews—1. The bearing of the future upon the present world. (1) The dead are waiting the appearance of Christ. (2) The most exalted of the departed spirits here do homage to Him. 2. The bearing of the visible upon the invisible world. This may be regarded as the earnest and commencement of Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. iii. 19, iv. 6).

3. How this world and the next meet and coalesce in the resurrection of Jesus.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*The Sun makes the stars more glorious.*—The Jews thought if Christ were advanced Moses must down. Whosoever preached Christ spake against Moses. No, Moses was never so glorious as in this attendance. It is otherwise with the Sun of Righteousness and the saints. Then with the body of the sun and the stars: these do, *occidere heliace*, not appear when they come nearer to the sun. But our Sun of Glory makes these stars, the nearer they be, to be the more glorious. As in Joseph's dream, the sun, moon, and stars were all shining together.—*Bishop Brownrigg.*

*Communion with Christ now and hereafter.*—Moses and Elias were men of much communion with God upon earth; many heavenly intercourses passed between them; and now they are admitted into a near and sweet and familiar communication. Men of communion with God here shall be received with more free access and familiar conversation with Christ in heaven. They who never maintain speech with God here, how can they look to have access in heaven? They who love to come into His presence, delight in hearing Him speak to them, and they to Him by prayer and meditation—they shall have nearest and freest and sweetest communion hereafter.—*Ibid.*

*Christ seen with His foreannouncers.*—What could so befit the Creator's Christ as to manifest Him in the company of His own foreannouncers? to let Him be seen with those to whom He had appeared in revelations? to let Him be speaking to those who had spoken of Him? to share His glory with those by whom He used to be called the Lord of Glory, even with those chief servants of His, one of whom was once the moulder of His people, the other afterwards the reformer thereof?—*Tertullian.*

Ver. 5. *The good intention and the*

*error of Peter.*—1. He was anxious to display the agreement between the Old and New Covenants; but by an outward amalgamation, not by their internal connexion. 2. He was ready to renounce the world; but by an outward institution (such as monasticism and anchoretism), not by an inward act. 3. He wished to perpetuate this season of spiritual fellowship; but by giving it an outward and fixed form, not by converting it into a spring of hidden life.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*Heaven on earth.*—1. Where it may be found. (1) In secret fellowship with God. (2) In a life of spiritual love and friendship. (3) In the courts and at the altar of the Lord. 2. How it should be sought. (1) By preserving purity of heart (or by perseverance in the faith). (2) By constant increase of spirituality in our wishes and inclinations (or sanctification). (3) By ever keeping before our minds and hearts our eternal calling (or watching and prayer).—*Rambach.*

*Good to be with Jesus.*—If we find it as impossible as Peter did to live retired from all conflict and intercourse with all kinds of men; if, like Peter, we have to descend into a valley ringing with demoniac's cries; if we are called upon to deal with the world as it actually is—deformed, dehumanised by sin: is it nothing that we can assure ourselves of the society and friendship of One who means to remove all suffering and all sin, and who does so not by a violent act of authority, but by sympathy and patient love, so that we can be His brighter instruments, and in healing and helping others help and heal ourselves!—*M. Dods, D.D.*

*Calvary or not Calvary?*—That was the issue. It was the alternative that comes to each one of us at some time or other in life. Ease and safety, or duty and sacrifice? Retire from the conflict and live in glorious peace? or fight on and fall?—*J. Halsey.*

*Danger of saint-worship.*—The same feeling which induced Peter to utter these words has probably been the

foundation of the errors of the Church of Rome with respect to the worship of saints. If his desire had been permitted, and three tabernacles had been erected, these would have become three temples of worship, and that homage which was due to Christ alone would have been divided with His saints. Such practically has been the case in the Church of Rome. Men have been attracted by the glory of the saints, and, forgetting that it was all derived from Christ, have treated them as if they were each alone and by themselves worthy of their homage. The tabernacle of the saints has been preferred too often to that of the King of saints, on the supposition that, because they have themselves suffered all the trials which we suffer, they are better able to sympathise with human weakness, and therefore will become intercessors for men with Christ. But need we any intercessor with Him?

*There are mountains in the kingdom of God.*—The soul can withdraw from the multiplied cares and distractions of the work-a-day world life to find restful influence and inspiring companionship on their quiet heights. On the hill-tops of gracious ordinances, in special seasons of fellowship with the Eternal Father, through the revealing Son, by the blessed whisperings of the Spirit, the soul will feel and manifest the reality and blessedness of upper-world revelations and voices in a way not otherwise attainable. Enjoying these things in heavenly places, with Peter it will say, "It is good to be here." In that clear upper air the eye will behold, as never before, the beauties of holiness and the deformities of sin. The soul shall put on a radiancy born of an atmosphere purified from the influences of malarial levels. But it is not the will of God that the soul should seek selfishly to abide there. It is not to be drawn away from and raised un influentially above the crying needs of fallen men. The healing power of its contact with Divine things is needed in the plain below. The attractions of a contem-

plative life must not therefore lead to forgetfulness or neglect of the demands for practical toil and self-denial. Neither, on the other hand, must those quiet seasons of withdrawal from earthly distractions be forgotten or neglected. The soul then puts on new strength by nearer fellowship with God. All this must not be defeated by the despotic tendencies and imperious claims of practical work. If so, the soul will suffer loss, power be paralysed, and blessings withheld from men. It is the union of both that will make the well-balanced, healthy, Christlike soul. — *Wm. M. Campbell.*

Ver. 7. *The overshadowing cloud.* — The outer skirts of the central glory began to advance — to enlarge their borders and to encompass the chosen three. Peter and James and John stand for a while in the golden suburbs of the heavenly Jerusalem. "A bright cloud overshadowed them." He who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" softened the dazzling brightness with a luminous curtain. Nevertheless, even in the haze of the cloud that relieved the blaze, they were affrighted. The majesty was veiled to them, yet they were afraid. The glory was tempered to them, yet they trembled. But if the subdued flashing of the clouded splendour alarmed them, the thunder of the voice that came out of the cloud appalled them. It was the voice of God! — *Prof. T. S. Evans.*

That overshadowing cloud warns us as it warned St. Peter, that this world is a battle-field, not a vision of peace, a working time, not the rest that remaineth; the Mount of Crucifixion, not the Mount of Glory. To our Blessed Lord Himself that overshadowing cloud was a type of what His earthly life was to be. Says Jeremy Taylor: "His transfiguration was a bright ray of glory; but then, also, He entered into a cloud, and was told a sad story of what He was to suffer at Jerusalem. For this Jesus was like the rainbow, which God set in the clouds as a sacrament, to confirm a



promise and establish a grace. He was half made of the glories of the light, and half of the moisture of a cloud."

*Divine secrets.*—There is no manner of absurdity in supposing a veil on purpose drawn over some scenes of Infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the sight of which might some way or other strike us too strongly; or that better ends are designed and served by their being concealed than could be by their being exposed to our knowledge. The Almighty may cast clouds and darkness round about Him for reasons and purposes of which we have not the least glimpse or conception (Rom. xi. 33; Eccles. xvi. 21, 22; John xx. 29).—*Bishop Butler.*

*God's glory veiled in mercy.*—When the eye gazes on the sun, it is more tormented with the brightness than pleased with the beauty of it; but when the beams are transmitted through a coloured medium, they are more temperate and sweetened to the sight. The Eternal Word shining in His full glory, the more bright the less visible is He to mortal eyes; but the Incarnate Word is eclipsed and allayed by a veil of flesh (Heb. x. 20), and so made accessible to us. God, out of a tender respect to our frailty and fears, promised to raise up a Prophet clothed in our nature (Exod. xx. 18, 19; Deut. xviii. 15-19), that we might comfortably and quietly receive His instructions (Job xxxiii. 6, 7; John i. 18; Luke iv. 20-22).—*Dr. Bates.*

*The vision withdrawn.*—A Christian's highest enjoyments are sometimes put an end to by God Himself. He may think that he has sinned away his previous privilege, or trifled it away, or by some means driven it away; and this is perhaps very generally the truth. But it is not always so. The intercepting cloud, like that which we are now considering, is sometimes of God's sending. The vision has done its work—its appointed, strengthening, comforting work; and that done, the vision is withdrawn.

*The gospel cloud.*—The law, that is a cloud, dark and obscure; but the gospel, that is a clear cloud. Still, indeed, the gospel is a cloud, it gives no full evident view; but yet it is a clear cloud, it hath many rays and beams of light in it. The law had a dark cloud, we could not see through it; their shadows were remote and obscure. Their circumcision was a dark cloud, immediately signifying God's covenant with Abraham. Our baptism is a cloud, a bodily, material type, an outward element; but it is a clear cloud, representing distinctly the washing away the filth of the flesh by the blood of Christ. Their Passover was a dark cloud, representing their delivery out of Egypt immediately, but darkly the Messiah. Our Lord's Supper is a cloud, a veil of bread and wine is over it; but yet it is a clear cloud, immediately shewing Christ and all His benefits. Their covenant was a cloud, covered with temporary promises, with the promise of Canaan. Ours is a cloud indeed, we cannot see those things that it promises; but yet a clear cloud, immediately presenting to us immediate promises of heaven. The light of the law was like the light of a candle; ours, as the day-star.

—*Bishop Brownrigg.*

"*Hear Him.*"—1. He has truth which can never deceive you, a wisdom which knows what you need, a goodness which will command nothing but what will bless. 2. If you hear Him, He has promised to hear you (John xvi. 7). 3. He speaks to you on the subject of greatest importance, and speaks with a clearness, emphasis, authority, decision, which scatter all doubts and solve all perplexities. 4. God has declared what will be the consequence of refusing to hear Him (Deut. xviii. 19). 5. If you hear Him not, and keep not His words, you are building your hopes upon the sand; and when the tempest comes, as come it will, your fabric of happiness must fall, and great will be the fall of it.—*J. Sanderson, D.D.*

"*Hear Him.*"—1. Reverently. 2.

With docility. 3. With personal, special, and practical application. 4. With a deep, solemn sense of your responsibility.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 8. "*Jesus only.*"—1. Moses and Elias, the law and the prophets, have but a temporary station and abode in the Church. Christ being brought into the world, they are withdrawn. 2. Christ's office and glory and government in His Church, 'tis lasting and perpetual. 3. The eye and observation and faith of the Church is fixed upon Christ only.—*Bishop Brownrigg.*

*The eye of the Church fixed on Christ.*—The eye of the Church looks only upon Christ, fixes upon Him, and expects no other. This is the main difference betwixt the Jewish Church and ours. They were all in expectation, and were waiters for better times. But our faith hath Him exhibited and presented, and rests upon Him. Hence Christ forewarns them not to listen to or look after any other. The sun arising, darkens all the stars; so all the former saints are obscured to the eye of the Church, and He alone must shine in His full glory. As when the king enters into any city all authority is resigned up to him, all viceroys and lieutenants must resign up to him, so Moses and the prophets all yield up their place in the Church to Christ.—*Ibid.*

*Christ the Sum of revelation.*—It is the summing up of revelation; all others vanish, He abides. It is the summing up of the world's history. Thickening folds of oblivion wrap the past, and all its mighty names become forgotten; but His figure stands out, solitary against the background of the past, as some great mountain, which is seen long after the lower summits are sunk below the horizon. Let us make this the summing up of our lives. We can venture to take Him for our sole Helper, Pattern, Love, and Aim, because He, in His singleness, is enough for our hearts.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 9. *Reasons for concealment.*—This vision of Christ's Divinity and glory must be concealed till after His resurrection. 1. Till then Christ is *in statu humiliationis*, and so He will have His majesty and glory to be covered. Now He terms Himself the Son of Man. He was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. i.). Thus He was pleased to veil His glory, and to become vile, and of no reputation. 2. It is *documentum modestiæ*. His glory, He is not ambitious to publish it—as St. Paul fourteen years concealed his revelations. He glories in his infirmities and weaknesses; but till he was constrained he kept his rapture concealed. 3. Till His resurrection these apostles were *inepti*, weak and carnal, not sufficiently grounded in this doctrine of Christ's Divinity. After His resurrection, then they were endued with strength from above, and then those mysteries that they could not bear the Comforter revealed to them. 4. *Quia incredibile.* The infidelity of the world was not yet to be removed; it would not believe there had been such a vision. Infidelity deprives us of many truths that God would otherwise reveal to us. 5. *Ne impediret passionem.* It troubled Pilate to hear it mentioned that Christ was the Son of God. And St. Paul saith, had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Life and Glory. He purposely concealed His Deity to give way to His passion. And hence it is that He spake of His Divinity very reservedly. He charged they should tell no men who He was (Mark viii. 20), but (ver. 32) He spake plainly of His passion.—*Bishop Brownrigg.*

*Reasons for silence.*—1. Because the Jews were to have no sign, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: they had seen enough to leave their unbelief without excuse. 2. Because among the rude, after the publication of such a glory, the following Cross would have bred scandal. If He were invested with such glory, why could

He not keep Himself in it? 3. Because till His resurrection had made way for it, the world would never have given credit to this wonder. 4. According to that (Eccclus. xi. 28), judge no man blessed before his death. Then they witnessed it, preached it, wrote it: we hear it, let us all believe it, that we may one day enjoy it in the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ.—*Thos. Adams.*

*The silence enjoined* was the first step into the Valley of Humiliation. It was also a test whether they had understood the spiritual teaching of the vision. And their strict obedience, not questioning even the grounds of the injunction, proved that they had learned it.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

*Transfigurations not to be talked about.*—1. Transfigurations are not themes for common gossip. Those bitter conflicts that turn to raptures are things we had rather not speak of. The common, prosaic, worldly mind would not understand them—would, indeed, only find food for ridicule in them. 2. Besides, our transfigurations do not need to be talked about. They proclaim themselves. If we have experienced a great spiritual uplifting, the thrill of an inward illumination, the world will know it without our saying anything about it.—*J. Halsey.*

Even to His fellow-disciples the believer cannot relate all that the

Saviour has often let him taste.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*

How some Christians are perpetually tormented with a notion that they must testify to whatever manifestation of God is granted to themselves, at the risk of bringing shallowness and weakness upon their own experience!—*C. C. Starbuck.*

Ver. 10. *Submissive silence.*—So entire was their submission that they dared nor even ask the Master about a new and seemingly greater mystery than they had yet heard—the meaning of the Son of Man rising from the dead. Did it refer to the general resurrection? was the Messiah to be the first to rise from the dead, and to waken the other sleepers—or was it only a figurative expression for His triumph and vindication?—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

*Learn*—1. Even the best Christians are by nature and of themselves slow to conceive and understand the mysteries of faith and doctrines of Christ taught in the gospel. 2. True faith and sanctifying grace in this life may stand with ignorance in some points of Christian faith, at least for a time. 3. It is a good and profitable cause for Christians to confer and reason together by mutual questioning one with another about those points of Christian religion whereof they are yet ignorant or doubtful.—*G. Petter.*

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—29.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xvii. 14-21; LUKE ix. 37-43.)

*The afflicted child.*—Moses, when he descended from the mount, found that the people in his absence had lapsed into idolatry; and our Lord, in descending from the Mount of Transfiguration, found that His followers had been surprised into spiritual impotence and failure. The swift transition from the glories of the Mount to the trials and toils that awaited Him below may be regarded as typical of the life of all Christians,—the mount (ver. 9) and the multitude (ver. 14); the supreme festival and the fiery trial; to-day, ecstasies and glories that tell of heaven; to-morrow, conflicts with demoniacal degradation and fury that disclose the depths of hell. The appearance of our Lord on the scene wrought an immediate transformation; it was like the arrival of a general on the field of battle in time to retrieve the fortunes of his army when wellnigh



defeated. He always comes to succour His own at the right time and with the right blessing: He is "a very present help in trouble."

**I. A distressed child.**—The ground of the disorder was natural; the child suffered from a physical complaint, perhaps the most severe form of epileptic lunacy that was brought to Christ for healing. But on this ground a worse spiritual disorder was superinduced. The disorder of the child is a picture of sin as a spiritual evil. The child was deaf; so a sinner refuses to hear the voices of God and conscience. The child was dumb; so the sinner's tongue is not used for God in testimony and song. The child was mad; so the sinner, under the influence of that "spirit that now worketh [*lit.* energiseth] in the children of disobedience," is a maniac.

**II. An anxious father.**—The colloquy our Lord had with him is a type of the method by which a seeker is led into stronger faith. "The man had said to Him, 'If Thou canst do'; Jesus retorts upon him, 'If thou canst believe.' The man had said, 'If Thou canst do anything'; Jesus replies, 'All things are possible' to faith: 'My doing all depends on thy believing.' To impress this still more He redoubles upon the believing: 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' . . . Two things are very remarkable here: (1) The felt and owned presence of unbelief, which only the strength of the man's faith could have so revealed to his own consciousness. (2) His appeal to Christ for help against his past unbelief—a feature in the case quite unparalleled, and shewing more than all protestations could have done the insight he had attained of a power in Christ more glorious than any he had besought for his poor child."

**III. The baffled apostles.**—In their worshipping exercises on the Mount some of the disciples had to contend with infirmity and sleep; whilst in the activities of public life in the valley others had to contend with impotence and the shame of failure. Possibly the disciples, deprived of the presence of the Master, and the chief apostles, in whom dwelt most of His spirit, had neglected fasting and prayer; the sad prophecy of His death may have damped the spirits of the weakest of them, or they yielded to fear in view of the special virulence of the disorder. The kind of demon that tortured the child required more than ordinary spiritual vigour to expel him—a faith braced up by intense devotion, and such rigorous self-denial as would weaken the hold of the lower nature upon the higher, and aid in spiritual meditation and fellowship.

**IV. An effectual Healer.**—In the exercises of devotion on the Mount He was declared to be the Master; and in the exercises of active zeal below He asserts His absolute power and dominion—not only over the minds of men, as illustrated in the scribes, the multitude, the father, and the disciples, but also over the rage and malice of demons. Impotence, in some form or other, prevailed in all the actors in the scene except Himself; but "power belonged unto Him"—a power that fell in anger on a malicious demon and in blessing on a helpless child.—*J. H. Morgan.*

*The power and the difficulties of faith.*—This story is strikingly illustrative both of the difficulties and the power of faith,—the power of faith, which caused the ultimate healing; the difficulties of faith, which caused the previous failure of that power.

**I. The difficulty of believing is very great and very strong.**—1. The disciples of Jesus frequently and very keenly felt this difficulty. Their faith was constantly breaking down; at almost every great crisis it completely failed them: the falsehood and treachery in Pilate's hall, the desertion at the Cross. Their impotency to heal this epileptic child is an illustration of this. From the context of the narrative it would appear that it was the three most conspicuous of our

Lord's disciples to whom the sorrowing father brought his epileptic child, and that at a time when we should naturally suppose their faith would have been in a condition of the greatest and most triumphant vigour. For they had just descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, they had just been enveloped in the glory of the Lord, and had heard celestial voices testifying to the Divinity of their Master. 2. When we turn away from the disciples to the distressed and sorrowing father, we find an illustration of the difficulties of believing under changed and opposite circumstances. The disciples were in a state of joy and gladness after the Transfiguration; the father of the epileptic child was in a state of grief and sore affliction. They were in the light on the mountain-top; he was amid the darkness down in the valley. Yet he found the difficulties of believing not less hard than they. "If Thou canst do anything." "Lord! I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." 3. Faith is one of the most difficult of Christian exercises. A little faith is more or less common; but much faith is very rare. We all, I suppose, believe in a greater or less degree—a degree at least large enough to justify our repetition of the Church's creeds. But the faith which stately recites the creeds is not commonly great faith; it is the ordinary faith of the ordinary Christian—the minimum, without which we could not decently profess to be Christians at all. 4. The difficulty of miracles, according to Christ's declaration, is not the difficulty of God's doing, but the difficulty of man's believing. Not material laws, but spiritual unfaith—this is the insuperable hindrance to miracles. 5. The experience of all the ages fully attests the truth of the explanation of Christ. Extraordinary faith is pre-essential to extraordinary action; the miracle of believing precedes the miracle of doing. It is as impossible to think living thoughts with a dead brain, or to raise heavy weights with a palsied arm, as to do wonders with a doubting soul or a dead faith. Failure, even in miracle, is practically synonymous with faithlessness.

## II. In every age power has been given to men in proportion to their faith.—

1. Seldom, indeed, has the power of faith extended to the control of the material universe, though in the instance of Christ frequently, and of others occasionally, even matter has been visibly subjugated to the influences of faith; and modern psychical researches are ever tending more and more clearly to demonstrate the possibility of the interpenetration of matter by will, and therefore *a fortiori* by faith, which as a spiritual energy is often more powerful than will. But outside the material universe and in the realm of purpose and religion we see the power of faith perpetually exemplified. According to the measure of our faith it is daily done unto us. According to the measure of our faith it is also daily done by us. Great deeds are great faith made visible; great faith is great deeds made possible. 2. Seeing, then, that the experience of the ages attests the truth of Christ's explanation concerning the rarity of miracles, and also His declaration of the potency of faith, the possibility of believing is for each of us a very momentous possibility. "Canst thou," is it possible for thee, to "believe"? That is the great question, upon the answer to which everything of real importance in life depends. If thou canst believe, there is possible to thee—everything; but if thou canst *not* believe, there is possible to thee—nothing! 3. The difficulties of belief in our age are without denial peculiarly great. It is not merely that doubt is in the air; that the intellectual and academic atmosphere is charged with currents of dubitation; that physical science, which depends for its existence upon experiment and demonstration, and has achieved such striking successes in the department of matter by the diligent use of its own methods, should have been emboldened to try those methods upon religion,—it is not these things which make the difficulties of belief so peculiarly great in the present age. (1) The moral and spiritual characteristics of our

age are not favourable to faith. Our age is an age of great wealth; and an age of great wealth is never an age of great faith, the *tendency* of wealth being always towards luxury and great comfortableness, and neither luxury nor great comfortableness being a good soil for religious growth. Moreover the effect of spiritual drowsiness among the rich is to produce a similar drowsiness among the poor. The poor perceive that the profession of Christianity by the rich seldom produces anything great or striking in the way of sympathy or self-sacrifice, and they therefore grow largely indifferent to the profession of it among themselves. (2) But far greater than all other difficulties are the difficulties inherent in our own moral and spiritual constitution. The visible over-masters us; the invisible is less than half real. Our occupations and employments, the urgency of earning our daily bread, the need for concentrating our thoughts upon worldly things in order to gain subsistence and make progress in our trade or profession—all unite in giving prominence to temporal realities, and in hiding from view the realities which are eternal. Above all, the natural deceitfulness of the human heart revolts against the constraining power of faith. 4. Yet great as these difficulties are, they are by no means insuperable. Far from it. All things are possible to God; and to that man whose mind is ever dwelling upon the Eternal, the Infinite, the Invisible—whose spirit is thoroughly interpenetrated with the Spirit of God—to that man also most things are possible likewise.—*Canon Diggle.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 14. *The scribes questioning.*—The scribes probably argued that failure in one case proved deception in all. How true to nature is this picture! If they had encouraged the disciples to *try again with prayer*, and had knelt with the father of the boy asking God to give the disciples power, they could have prevented the failure which they denounce! It is like the world—to withhold help, and then give blame for what it might have prevented. Pity the woes of men, so often intensified and perpetuated by men disputing as to who is to blame for them, instead of uniting in the effort to cure.—*R. Glover*

*He came*—as always, and to us also—unexpectedly, most opportunely, and for the real decision of the question in hand. There was immediate calm, preceding victory.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

*The world wants us.*—However good it may be to be in nature's silent retreats for a season, the world wants us; for it is full of evils to be remedied, full of work to be done, full of demons to be cast out. There are calls *down* as well as *up*. And we must be as alert to the one call as to the other.—*J. Halsey.*

Vers. 16-18. *Lessons.*—1. When Jesus Christ absents Himself from us we are nothing. 2. A minister must not expect to have always success in the conversion of sinners. 3. Sometimes the greatest care, application, and talents signify nothing, because God designs to effect the thing by Himself, and to make His ministers more fit for His work by making them more humble. 4. Children diseased and possessed are an evident proof of original sin, because under a just God none are miserable unless they deserve it. 5. Bodily possession is a consequence and emblem of that of the soul, and of the dominion which the devil exercises over the heart by means of the passions.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 17. "*A dumb spirit.*"—The poor lad was a demoniac, and the demon had deprived him of the use of the affiliated organs of speech and hearing (see ver. 25). There is nothing incredible in such power, if evil spirits there be at all. Even some *men* have power to deprive, for the time being, some of their fellow-men of speech, hearing, feeling, seeing. What marvel,



then, that unincarnated spirits should have a corresponding power? There are assuredly in existence, as W. G. Palgrave says, "malignant cosmical influences, be they what they may." "The spirit world," says Delitzsch, "good as well as bad, has been in all times the background of the events that transpire on earth."—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Ver. 19. *Christ's forbearance to be imitated.*—Let us imitate on occasion the obedience and charity of Christ, which detained Him in the world, though the incredulity and contradiction thereof were a continual trouble to Him. How intolerable soever some ministers and pastors, by reason of their want of faith and their other defects, may possibly be, yet Christ ceases not mildly to bear with them, to continue with them, according to His promise, to work by their ministry, and even to produce by them extraordinary effects. Whoever finds his endeavours ineffectual on souls enslaved to sin and the devil ought to conduct them to Christ, by addressing himself to Him in more fervent prayers, or by procuring them the assistance of some others of His servants.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 23. *Faith* is in its essence the power by which we grasp the future, the unseen, the infinite, the eternal; and in its application it is a principle of knowledge, a principle of power, a principle of action. It is then on man's side the condition and the measure of Divine blessing. By faith we lift up the sightless eye, and it is opened: by faith we stretch out the withered arm, and it is made whole: by faith, bound hand and foot with gravecloths, we come forth from the tomb of custom which lies upon us

"With a weight  
Heavy as frost and deep almost as life."

In the Creed I do not simply acknowledge the existence of these Divine Persons of the One Godhead, but I throw myself wholly upon their power and love. I have found and I

trust without reserve Him who made, redeemed, sanctifies me. I have gained not a certain conclusion, but an unfailing, an all-powerful Friend. "I believe in Him! He can help me; and He will help me."—*Bishop Westcott.*

*There is in faith a power to make God's resources our own tributaries and auxiliaries.*—The great reason why we make such slow gains in our own religious life in the warfare with inward sin, selfishness, and pride, is that we make no calculation for any strength but our own, and do not muster in our reserves. We are in this respect where manufacturing was in mechanical life a hundred years ago, when everything was done by hand; where travelling was fifty years ago, when everything was done by stage; where communication was twenty-five years ago, when all messages were sent by post. We do not calculate on a margin. We are doing all by a dead lift.—*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*

Ver. 24. *Prayer for faith.*—He who implores faith with tears has it already in his heart.—*Canstein.*

*Doubt and faith.*—1. Doubt and faith can coexist in the heart, and actually do. As creatures of God we must believe; as fallen, disordered, and disorganised creatures we must doubt. 2. The will can choose between doubting and believing. It can control and shape the thoughts; it can throw its weight on one side or the other when the battle rages in the soul. And because it can do this we are responsible for the strength or weakness of our faith. 3. If we choose to believe, God will help.—*M. Dix, D.D.*

*Faith's progress.*—We have here—1. The birth of faith. (1) Eager desire. (2) A sense of utter helplessness. (3) The acceptance of Christ's calm assurances. 2. The infancy of faith. The sense of possessing some feeble degree of any virtue or excellence, and the effort to put it forth, is the surest way of discovering how little of it we have. On the other side sorrow for the lack of some form of

goodness is itself a proof of the partial possession, in some rudimentary and incipient form, of that goodness.

3. The cry of infant faith. "Help Thou mine unbelief" may have either of two meanings. The man's desire was either that his faith should be increased and his unbelief "helped" by being removed by Christ's operation upon his spirit, or that Christ would "help" him and his boy by healing the child, though the faith which asked the blessing was so feeble that it might be called unbelief. "Heal my child, though it is unbelief as much as faith that asks Thee to do it." 4. The education of faith. Christ paid no heed in words to the man's confession of unbelief, but proceeded to do the work which answered his prayer in both its possible meanings. He responded to imperfect confidence by His perfect work of cure; and by that perfect work of cure He strengthened the imperfect confidence which it had confessed. Thus He educates us by His answers—His over-answers—to our poor desires; and the abundance of His gifts rebukes the poverty of our petitions more emphatically than any words of remonstrance beforehand could have done. He does not lecture us into faith, but He blesses us into it.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*Unbelief helped.*—Beautiful to the eye of the father was the lad brought to Jesus, when the spasm was not on him. So is a true faith in Christ. It is the child of the heart. It is the image of all that is parental and Divine in the human soul. The affections so naturally fasten upon it as upon the child given to the arms and the bosom—to the kiss and fondnesses of maternal and paternal love. We so speak of a favourite idea of an author, an artist, a schemer—we say, It is the child of his heart. It stands out, as it were, to his eye as a child born to him, in whom he has garnered up great hopes, and with whom is linked all the happiness of life. More justly may this be regarded the Christian's faith in immortality, with the light it sheds on

present duty, joy, and sorrow. So did Socrates regard his fainter and less beautiful hope of life beyond death. When Socrates held his last conversation with his scholars, it seemed at one time that all the arguments for the immortality of the soul had been overthrown; and as it was a custom for the Greeks to cut off their hair and throw it into the tomb at the time of the burial of a friend, Socrates took hold of the long drooping locks of one of his disciples, and asked if that pretty hair would not be cut off on the morrow—the time he should be dead. He was answered "Yes"; and then he added, "If you take my advice, you will not stay so long!" and explained his meaning that it was more fit that the death of a great hope be mourned than the death of a friend. But the beautiful faith of many a heart does not so much die as it may be said to be affected with spasms. It is tortured. Its harmonies are untuned, and it is a mournful thing. It is as uncontrollable as the poor lad to whom the apostles could bring no help, so that the sorrow of that father is but a picture of the troubles of him whose faith is not healthy, strong, and happy. There is just enough of life in their faith for them to say, "I believe!" but there is weakness enough to make them add, with tears, the confession, "Help my unbelief!" To Christ must the heart come; and the result of patient waiting upon Him shall be, the languid pulse of faith shall be quickened—the "veins shall feel the rosy tide," and as Christ lifted up the lad and he arose to tremble and to fall no more, so shall belief be released of all the spasms of unbelief and the fire and the flood be feared no more. Take to Christ thy faith. Its weakness will not be despised. Thy tears will be pearls in the treasury of Christ. Bring to Him thy soul by adopting the simple rule, to try by the spirit of His life all doctrines and theories, all creeds and articles.—*Henry Bacon.*

Ver. 25. *Lessons.*—1. Those who love

not either to speak or to hear of God are possessed with a dumb and deaf spirit, from which Christ alone can deliver them. Happy are they into whom he never enters any more! 2. What would not God grant to a faith which is perfect, since even to an imperfect one He grants much more than it asks? 3. Jesus Christ never speaks to the devil but with threats, as to a slave. There are no measures to be kept where there is no longer the least hope of reconciliation or charity.—*P. Quesnel.*

Vers. 26, 27. *Man's extremity, God's opportunity.*—It is generally when things have come to the worst that God interposes and delivers—and not until then. 1. Because then the need of help is the greatest. 2. Because then there is the clearest evidence of the failure of all human help. 3. Because then deliverance is seen to be of God only. 4. Because then the omnipotence of God is displayed in accomplishing what none other can effect.

Ver. 27. "*Took him by the hand.*"—**I. Look at the hand, as the helping organ and instrument of a man.**—"Jesus took him by the hand." "Very well," some of you say, "how common, how natural! Men take each other by the hand every day." And therefore, my friends, be sure, since it is so common and so natural, that it is most beautiful and most significant, when we consider it closely. Our most common and familiar actions are the richest in beauty and in meaning. The most precious thoughts lie hid in the most homely things.

**II. This action of the Lord appears to be most characteristic of His whole ministry to man.**—In Christ the hand of God touched the sick and tormented world and lifted it up; for in Christ God brought Himself into living, loving, and helpful contact with the mass of sin, misery, and corruption where-with the devil had filled His world.

**III. The true form of Christian activity is indicated to us in this**

**hand-helping of our Lord.**—The touch of a Christian's hand, the tones of a Christian's voice, the strong sympathies of a Christian's heart, have a magic potency. This is God's own appointed instrument for healing and blessing the world. You are not following His footsteps if you are not entering yourself into some chambers of sickness, some homes of sorrow, some dens of vice and crime; if sinners are not feeling that you are not afraid of them; that like your Master you have come to seek them, and would rather have it said that you kept company with publicans and sinners than hear your name rung from the trumpet of fame.—*J. B. Brown.*

*Christ's humanity.*—Christ proves His Divinity by His humanity. I know He is Divine because He was so humane.

*The helping hand.*—What a happiness is it when, amidst the pangs and struggles of conversion, a sinner meets with an enlightened guide, a charitable hand to lift him up in his dejection, to comfort him under his pains, and to lead him into the ways of God! But what docility, what respect, what gratitude, does not the invincible hand of Christ, which is concealed under this visible one, deserve?—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 28. *Dissatisfaction with failure a hopeful sign.*—There was hopefulness in the fact that they were dissatisfied with their own failing. As long as the Christian Church is keenly alive to the humiliation which it brings upon itself and the dishonour upon its Master by its failures there is hope of it. It is when the Church is utterly indifferent to its failures in casting out demons that it subsides into a hopeless condition. But whenever the Church of Christ after failing to do its work feels keenly the disgrace of failure and will not tolerate it until at least the secret is explained, but goes to the Master and asks Him in the agony of a keen disappointment, "Why could not we cast him out?" then the very failure will lead up to nobler attainments.



The Master will give the secret of successful work, and sooner or later the Church will arouse itself again and rise into the dignity of its calling and its position.—*D. Davies.*

Ver. 29. *Prayer and fasting.*—It is not meant that faith might be omitted (Matt. xvii. 20); nor that faith must be merged in prayer and fasting: but that faith must be in maximum degree, and that consequently those spiritual exercises which condition its highest attainable exaltation must be realised. There must be *prayer*, the uplifting of desire till it settle in the will of God. There must be *fasting*, the denying of all in the periphery of self that would hinder the uprising of the desire to God, or its absolute repose in His will.—*J. Morison, D.D.,*

*Prayer and fasting*, in the life of Christ, were the human expression of two deeper and Diviner things. His prayers, whether on mountain-slopes or at open grave-sides—whether for the renewal of His own strength or for the benefit of others—were the outcome and expression of a personal intercommunion with God, of which His life was the highest exemplification which the world has ever seen. His fastings were the expression—the manifestation to man—of a self-denial which can only be adequately expressed as absolute and selfish self-forgetfulness. In this utter and complete self-renun-

ciation and its counterpart of close and unbroken intercommunion with the Father—in His absolute oneness with the Father—Jesus went up to His struggles with evil in its many forms; and before this consecrated and engodded life the evil invariably fell. Demoniacal possessions—no matter what their form or how great their intensity—could not live in the white light that flashed from perfect self-oblation and unbroken intercourse with Heaven. Then why did the disciples fail? Because they fell immeasurably short of the Master's character. They were not nearly as close to God as He was. There was a great gulf between their puny and imbecile faith and His grand hold of God.—*R. H. Starr, D.D.*

*The power of prayer.*—It is not enough to have seen the vision on the mountain. We must foster the memory of it by our prayers; for prayer is the secret of holiness. It is the witness of our spirituality. It is the promise of the victory which shall be ours. We can do nothing of ourselves—that is the law of the spiritual life. But we can do all things by leaning on a higher Power. When the faith of men and of Churches has proved impotent to cope with the evil which has vitiated the heart of society, then a Divine voice is heard above the tumult, saying only, "Bring him hither to Me." It is Thy voice, O Lord Jesus, and we will obey it.—*J. E. C. Welldon.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 30—32.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xvii. 22, 23; LUKE ix. 43-45.)

*More explicit prediction of sufferings.*—After His transfiguration, and the performance of the above miracle, Christ proceeded through Galilee towards Jerusalem. He travels unknown, in order that He might instruct His disciples. An example of how we may spend time by the way.

I. He explained to them His present state: "*The Son of Man is delivered.*"—1. He had already been delivered by the Father—in purpose, promise, and deed—to stand in our room. 2. He had delivered Himself to law and justice, to be a curse for us. 3. He was about to be delivered by a traitorous disciple. Among the twelve He seems to have for a while a retreat; but He is betrayed. 4. The Father and Himself, in thus acting, shewed love—Judas, avarice.

II. He told them the parties into whose power He had been given: "*Into*

*the hands of men.*"—1. To be delivered into the hands of men is to be put into their power—to do to Him and with Him as they chose. 2. They could have this power only by special permission—from the Father and Himself. 3. It is marvellous that He should have been delivered into the hands of men. God in humanity. (1) It tested their character, and brought out their desperate wickedness. (2) It proved the voluntariness of His obedience. (3) It shewed how blind sin is in its supposed triumphs—how God brings glory out of rebellion.

III. **He told them what must befall Him at the hands of men:** "*They shall kill Him.*"—1. That Christ was to die was not now foretold for the first time. (1) In sacrifice He had been slain since the beginning of the world. (2) His sufferings had been predicted. (3) He had been hated in His law. (4) Killed in His people. (5) His life had been sought already. (6) The death of Christ was no singular event in the display of human character involved. 2. Conscience tells man that death is penal, and he uses it as such, and as the height of punishment. Man proclaimed Christ guilty. 3. Intensity of revenge leads him sometimes to add torture to death. Man proclaimed his own hatred to Christ. 4. This death of Christ was necessary. 5. Did take place—religion—law—power—people.

IV. **He revealed to them the future by telling them of His resurrection.**—1. Man's power and agency ended with His death. 2. Christ's resurrection was the result of an agency neither human nor satanic, but Divine. (1) Scripture prophecy called for it. (2) His office and undertaking called for it. (3) Divine justice called for it. (4) The exalted connexion of His humanity called for it. (5) The defeat of him who had the power of death led to it. 3. Christ followed man to death. Man follows Christ to life.

V. **We see that Christ had His sufferings ever in view.**—1. He knew Judas' part, and the priests' and the people's. He saw in their bosoms the fire, etc. 2. He anticipates the Father's. He knew His ire. 3. The feelings with which He approached these are mentioned, Luke xii. 50; John xii. 27.

VI. **He also kept in view that which was to follow.**—1. He contemplated the whole truth, and the one part balanced with the other. 2. "For the joy that was set before Him," etc.—*Jas. Stewart.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 31. *Sufferings and glory intimately connected.*—Jesus knew beforehand the whole amount of His sufferings, in all their connexions and bearings; and therefore never foretold them without likewise foretelling His resurrection; neither did He foretell this without foretelling His sufferings. Thus doth true faith apprehend the latter and the former as one entire matter, and makes very much of everything pertaining to either. Here is something for exercising the heart—something which must never be lost sight of, in the darkest night of affliction, or in the clearest blaze of the terrestrial noon; for it is to "guide

our feet into the way of peace." As we hold a candle to the flame until it is fully lighted, so we must hold ourselves to this subject with affecting meditation (Luke xxiv. 26; 1 Pet. v. 1; 2 Cor. xiii. 4).—*J. A. Bengel.*

Ver. 32. *Lessons.*—1. The spirit cannot understand what the flesh is unwilling to suffer. 2. This seed which Christ seems unprofitably to cast into a barren soil will bring forth fruit in due time. 3. We must not give over instructing, how dull soever the understandings of men are as to heavenly truths: the Spirit of God can open them, as He opened those of the

apostles. 4. We ought to be ashamed of that unreasonable bashfulness which makes us choose rather to continue ignorant than to discover our ignorance. Nothing but humility can secure us from it.—*P. Quesnel.*

*Understanding must precede speech.*—It is not to no purpose to speak things that are not presently understood. Seed, though it lies in the ground awhile unseen, is not lost or

thrown away, but will bring forth fruit. If you confine your teacher, you hinder your learning; if you limit his discourses to your present apprehensions, how shall he raise your understandings? If he accommodate all things to your present weakness, you will never be the wiser than you are now; you will be always in swaddling clothes (John ii. 22, xiv. 26).—*Dr. Whichcote.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 33—41.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xviii. 1-5; LUKE ix. 46-50.)

*Receiving and forbidding.*—Surely the disciples might have found something better to talk about on the road from Casarea, where they had heard from Jesus of His sufferings, than this miserable wrangle about rank! Probably they understood little of His meaning, but hazily thought that the crisis was at hand when He should establish the kingdom; and so their ambition, rather than their affection, was stirred. Perhaps, too, the dignity bestowed on Peter after his confession, and the favour shewn to the three witnesses of the Transfiguration, may have created jealousy. Matthew makes the quarrel to have been about future precedence; Mark, about present. The one was striven for with a view to the other.

**I. Note the law of service as the true greatness** (vers. 33-35).—"When He was in the house, He asked them." The tongues that had been so loud on the road were dumb in the house—silenced by conscience. His servants still do and say many things on the road which they would not do if they saw Him close beside them, and sometimes fancy that these escape Him. But when they are "in the house" with Him, they will find that He knew all that was going on; and when He asks the account of it, they too will be speechless. "If any man would be first," he is to be the least and servant, and thereby he will reach his aim. Of course that involves the conception of the nature of true greatness as service, but still the distinction is to be kept in view. Farther, "last of all" is not the same as "servant of all." The one expresses humility; the other, ministry. There are two paradoxes here. The lowest is the highest—the servant is the chief; and they may be turned round with equal truth—the highest is the lowest, and the chief is the servant. The former tells us how things really are, and what they look like, when seen from the centre by His eye. The latter prescribes the duties and responsibilities of high position. In fact and truth, to sink is the way to rise, and to serve is the way to rule—only the rise and the rule are of another sort than content worldly ambition, and the Christian must rectify his notions of what loftiness and greatness are. On the other hand, distinguishing gifts of mind, heart, leisure, position, possessions, or anything else, are given us for others, and bind us to serve. Both things follow from the nature of Christ's kingdom, which is a kingdom of love; for in love the vulgar distinctions of higher and lower are abolished, and service is delight.

**II. Note the exhibition of the law in a life.**—Children are quick at finding out who loves them, and there would always be some hovering near for a smile from Christ. With what eyes of innocent wonder the child would look up at Him, as He gently set him there, in the open space in front of Himself! **Mark**



does not record any accompanying words, and none were needed. The unconsciousness of rank, the spontaneous acceptance of inferiority, the absence of claims to consideration and respect, which naturally belong to childhood, as it ought to be, and give it winningness and grace, are the marks of a true disciple, and are the more winning in such because they are not of nature, but regained by self-abnegation. What the child is, we have to become. This child was the example of one half of the law, being "least of all," and perfectly contented to be so; but the other half was not shewn in him, for his little hands could do but small service. Was there, then, no example in this scene of that other requirement? Surely there was; for the child was not left standing, shy in the middle, but, before embarrassment became weeping, was caught up in Christ's arms and folded to His heart. He had been taken as the instance of humility, and he then became the subject of tender ministry. Christ and he divided the illustration of the whole law between them, and the very inmost nature of true service was shewn in our Lord's loving clasp and soothing pressure to His heart. Christ goes on to speak of the child not as the example of service, but of being served. The deep words carry us into blessed mysteries which recompense the lowly servants and lift them high in the kingdom. "One of such little children" means those who are thus lowly, unambitious, and unexact. "In My name" defines the motive as not being simple humanity or benevolence, but the distinct recognition of Christ's command and loving obedience to His revealed character. Unselfish deeds in His name open the heart for more of Christ and God, and bring on the doer the blessing of fuller insight, closer communion, more complete assimilation to his Lord. Therefore such service is the road to the true superiority in His kingdom, which depends altogether on the measure of His own nature which has flowed into our emptiness.

**III. The apostles' conscience-stricken confession of their breach of the law** (vers. 38-40).—Peter is not spokesman this time, but John, whose conscience was more quickly pricked. He begins to think that perhaps the man whom they had silenced was "one such little child," and had deserved more sympathetic treatment. Pity that so many listen to the law, and do not, like John, feel it prick them! Christ forbids such "forbidding." They are only to forbid those who do speak evil of Christ; to all others, even if they have not reached the full perception of truth, they are to extend patient forbearance and guidance. "The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped"; but the mouth that begins to stammer His name is to be taught and cherished.

**IV. We have the reward of receiving Christ's little ones set over against the retribution that seizes those who cause them to stumble** (vers. 41, 42).—These verses seem to resume the broken thread of ver. 37, whilst they also link on to the great principle laid down in ver. 40. He that is not against is for, even if he only gives a cup of water because they are Christ's. That shews that there is some regard for Jesus in him. It is a germ which may grow. Such a one shall certainly have his reward. That does not mean that he will receive it in a future life, but that here his deed shall bring after it blessed consequences to himself. Of these none can be more blessed than the growing regard for the Name, which already is in some degree precious to him. The faintest perception of Christ's beauty, honestly lived out, will be increased. Note, too, the person spoken of belongs to the same class as the silenced exorcist, thus reading the disciples a farther lesson. Jesus will look with love on the acts which even a John wished to forbid. Note, also, that the disciples here are the recipients of the kindness. They are no longer being taught to receive the little ones, but are taught that they themselves belong to that class, and need kindly succour from these outsiders, whom they had proudly thought to silence.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 33, 34. *Ambition a universal fault.*—How subtle is the poison of ambition! how difficult for a man to preserve himself from it! Few people are heartily willing to be below others; they find as much difficulty almost to bear an equality; and much the greatest number think of nothing but gaining a superiority. Who would imagine that ambition could take hold of persons who had forsaken all, and that the apostolical college should not be exempt from it? In short, everybody is subject to it, and nobody is willing to own it.—*P. Quesnel.*

Our Lord's question brings His hearers back to their higher selves, and they can again see that to be permitted to work *at all* in bringing God's kingdom to pass is a great blessing, in comparison with which all petty distinctions between this kind of work and that disappear out of view. We see in this instance how the mere *question* operates. Could any rebuke have met the purpose better? Do we not find that an accusation commonly provokes a defence, and that the temper which is bent on finding excuse is not that which leads a man to amend? Our Lord causes men's hearts to condemn them; and when so condemned they turn in their trouble to Him, and find that He is "greater than their hearts and will forgive them": whereupon a great light comes into their minds. This is what happened here.—*H. Latham.*

Ver. 35. *Service the road to preferment and rule.*—To lord it over men is not the way to win the first place in their hearts. The men whom we all know, admire, praise, whom we cheerfully acknowledge as our superiors, are those who live for others rather than for themselves. Men will resist mere power, but they bow to love.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

True greatness consists in renouncing greatness itself. A man becomes a

slave to it when once he desires it; he is above it whenever he despises it. The primacy or first place in humility is the only one to which we are permitted to aspire. To dispute with secular persons, which should be the greatest, is a thing very opposite to an ecclesiastical spirit. The only thing of which a minister of Christ ought to be ambitious is to be the last of all. Humility must not be an idle virtue, but a virtue useful to our neighbour. It places its chief joy not only in being below all, but even in serving all. For true charity is humble, and true humility is charitable.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 36. *Look at the children.*—Look at the children set by God in our midst. Christ's parable to His disciples can never grow stale, for always there are fresh young children in our midst to repeat it. They are there, and when we are sick with self-reflexion and self-preoccupation turn and look at the children. How simply they take their days! how gaily they face them! how fresh and natural the development of their life! how untrammelled by questionings about whether they are properly appreciated or no! They go, in tears perhaps as well as laughter, but always in all circumstances trusting to be just what they are, trusting to their own native reality, to the natural self as it acts in its spontaneous freedom. Love is trust—trust in God, the trust of a child that he was made to be what he is. We take our being on trust. No growth in self-direction diminishes in the least degree the absolute necessity of continuing to act in the child's trust. God's creative impulse abides from hour to hour within us, feeding, moulding, upholding, making us what we are; and the child in us alone enables us to respond to His impulse, to live in His breath, to move in His will. Oh, what sweet and tender

peace would spring up within our secret souls if deep within, below, and beyond all the self-questionings we could just quietly lie back in God like a child in the arms of Jesus! There is a great picture by Watts, charged with his mystic passion, in which an old man, worn and feeble, lies back in his chair, dying, and round him, dropped from his nerveless hands, lie all the gifts of his culture, the tools and signs of all that has been his in philosophy, in science and art. Wearily he fades away, amid the wreck of his highest human experiences; and then up above a great angel, benignant and strong, bears off his soul, new-born through death in the shape of a baby child, soft, white, and warm. A child-soul—that is what a man should have within him at the last, still living within him to surrender at death to his God. It is as a little child that he shall enter that new kingdom of love, as a little child that he should be taken up into the arms of Jesus and set there in the midst.—*Canon Scott-Holland.*

*Childhood our model.*—Was it the boy Ignatius or the little son of Peter? We know not. It was childhood, and not the particular child, which Jesus commended as the model of the Christian life. In the condensed report of the talk of Jesus at this time, Matthew tells us about “turning” from the natural or selfish mind to that of the child’s, or about being “converted.” Luke emphasises the fact that Jesus read the hearts of His disciples and spoke directly to these. Mark selects the blessedness of lowly service as the theme most urged upon His followers by Him who emptied Himself of His glory. In all three the main purpose of Jesus was to shew that the Christian life is but a glorified childhood.

Vers. 37. *The Church the guardian of the children.*—The care taken of these little ones may be regarded as among the tests of the sound state of any branch of the Church to which they

have been so lovingly commended by her Lord; they, in outward shew, poor, helpless, weak, ignorant, having everything to learn—to the eye of faith, cleansed in their Redeemer’s blood, waited upon and guarded by the highest angels, clad in the white robes of their baptismal purity, rich in invisible treasures, insensible to our poor outward world, and wrapped in a world unseen, and set forth as our example that we should become such as they. Of a truth, whether we contemplate them in *their* purity, or our Saviour’s “woe on such as cause them to offend,” one would alike shrink from the duty of forming what is of so great price and yet so frail, but that a duty is laid upon us, yea, “woe is on us, if we do it not”; and it is not we alone who do it, but He who saith, “Whoso receiveth one such little child in My name receiveth Me”; He whose face their angels in heaven do always behold.—*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*

*“Such children.”*—The term includes all who are in any way like such children: as, for instance, all who are helpless, as children are; all who are simple-minded, or even weak in mind; or, particularly, all who are young in the faith, who, like children, require the “milk” of the Word, and not its “strong meat.”—*M. F. Sadler.*

*“In My name.”*—That is, for My sake; not only because they are baptised or belong to Christian parents, though these are good reasons indeed, but because they partake of the nature which Christ took upon Him, because they belong to the race which Christ redeemed—because like Him they are poor, and have no settled homes, or because He may be honoured in their after-life. Such children are received in Christ’s name not only in orphanages or in Sunday-schools, but by many of the Christ-loving poor who have children of their own, and yet take into their homes some poor waif or stray, and cherish it as their own flesh and blood for no reward except the Lord’s approval.—*Ibid.*

*“Receiveth Me.”*—The grace of this



promise seems almost incredible. What an honour would any Christian have esteemed it if he had been permitted to receive Christ under his roof for a single hour, and yet that receiving might have been external and transitory; but the Lord here undoubtedly promises that to receive a little one in His name is to receive Him effectually.—*Ibid.*

Vers. 38-40. *Christian usefulness.*—

1. The great principle of Christian usefulness. He whose first concern it is to be faithful to Christ, as the Almighty Saviour of the human race and the Lord of the dead and of the living, will be equally faithful and pure in his conduct to the world around him: earnest in selecting the means and opportunities of usefulness; active and conscientious in applying them; firm in his purpose, in opposition both to foreseen and to unexpected difficulties, where he sees the good which may be done. 2. The obstructions to conscientious usefulness which in every age of the world arise from false conceptions or from a deliberate perversion of the genuine spirit of the gospel. 3. The indulgence which is due from sincere believers to the pure intentions of useful and upright men. Though the means employed should not embrace every instrument of usefulness which our peculiar views or habits might suggest to ourselves, when the general effect is visible and the means selected are in themselves beyond all exception, we are bound to regard the labours of the men who are employed together in conducting them as genuine service to our Blessed Master, and to respect them as fellow-workers together with Him.—*H. M. Wellwood.*

Ver. 38. *Indiscreet zeal.*—The most holy persons have sometimes occasion to secure themselves from secret emulations. We very easily mingle our own interests with those of God; and our vanity uses the glory of His name only as a veil. A preacher some-

times imagines that his only desire is that men should follow Christ and adhere to His Word; and it is himself whom he desires they should follow, and to whom he is very glad to find them adhere. John has fewer imitators of that perfect freedom from self-interest which he had after the descent of the Holy Ghost, than he has of this defect in his state of imperfection. A man willingly approves the good which is done by others, when he loves good for its own sake and God for His.—*P. Quesnel.*

*The confidence between Master and disciple* evidenced by this free avowal is to be marked: if the disciples had been set right whenever they were wrong, or had frequently met with reproach, such confidence might not have grown up. It was much helped on by their being sure that their Master would understand them: what often keeps young people from opening their hearts to their elders is that they are afraid of not being understood. But though our Lord is very gentle in His treatment of the particular case, yet He speaks strongly of the distemper of which a symptom had appeared—of the evil humour which vents itself in rebuffs.—*H. Latham.*

Ver. 39. *The Church's duty as to irregular preachers.*—There are great numbers of persons amongst us who are preaching Christ after their fashion who have had not only no commission from the Church, but no training even in the Scriptures from any professedly religious body whatsoever. Are we of the Church to forbid them, *i.e.* to denounce them as necessarily schismatic and anti-Christian? I think that this place, together with such words as those in Phil. i. 18, settles the matter that we are not. But then we are bound to do that which will entail upon ourselves far more trouble and odium. We are bound to witness to such preachers and their followers that Christ desires the absolute Unity of His Church, and exhibited His desire by very earnestly praying for it

(John xvii. 20, 21); so that if they preach such things as conversion and present acceptance of Christ without regard to the truth that there is not only "one Spirit" but "one Body," they may destroy with one hand what they think they build up with the other. We are bound also to tell them that in all probability they hold an imperfect, indeed a very mutilated Christianity; for all such persons are, by the necessity of their position as external to the Catholic Church, unable to comprehend the truths which relate to the Mystical Body, and in consequence they ignore the leading truths of the apostolic writings (Rom. vi., xii. 1-4; 1 Cor. vi. 18-20, x. 16-18, xii. 12-30; Eph. i. 22, 23, iii. 6, iv. 4-6); they in consequence disparage altogether the grace of Sacraments, have most imperfect views of the holiness of the Christian's body, and of set purpose absolve their followers from all need of preparation for the judgment of Christ. The loss of these truths we should bring before them very prayerfully and very humbly, knowing that the Church herself has in time past through her ministers imperfectly taught them; but still we should set them before them very decidedly, for they are not our truths, but the Lord's, and in so doing we shall not be without success.—*M. F. Sadler.*

"*Forbid him not.*"—We can conceive what such an utterance as this of Jesus was to the disciples as they listened to Him. Was it a disappointment that came to them? I think not. I think they were too great and noble men for that. I can almost see the face of John glowing with satisfaction and delight, and a certain release and freedom coming to his soul. I can almost hear him say: "Then I need not have rebuked that man. Then my Master will let me rejoice in every work that is being done in His name, no matter how imperfectly and irregularly it may be done." Oh, let that release come to your souls out of the words of Jesus! Do not think

yourselves ever bound to be narrow and exclusive in jealousy for your Lord. Believe He wants you to go through the world as He went through the world, seeking out what men are doing of good and rejoicing in that good.—*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*

*Christ suffers many things, in His Church which are done without His mission;* but He makes them contribute to the establishment of His kingdom. Whatever reason we may have to fear that some persons will not persevere in goodness, we must notwithstanding suffer them to continue their endeavours, when they appear to be anyways useful. God Himself authorises such persons, since it is He who performs the good in them. It is to make the world promote and carry on God's work, for a man to engage worldly people to do good, or to favour the Church. And this is sometimes even a beginning of their salvation.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 40. *On Christ's side.*—Not in the truth we believe, although it is good to believe all truth, lies the real sanction and warrant of our belonging to our Master, Christ. It is not in the regularity of our association with the Church, although it is good to be associated with that Church which He founded, and which has come down through the ages from Him. Ultimately there is only this test. We are on His side if we are not against Him. If our work in the world is helping men to be wicked instead of good, then, whatever may be our saying or our creed or our part in the assemblies of the Church, we are none of Jesus Christ's.—*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*

Ver. 41. *Sympathy with Christ's ministers.*—I. The need of sympathy with ministers of the gospel is implied.—1. Destitution may arise from thoroughness of devotion to their work. Care for the spiritual may trespass upon the temporal. History of Jesus; Paul. 2. Destitution may arise from

the opposition of the world to their work. Spoiling of goods. 3. Destitution may arise from Divine providence, in order to test their sincerity in the work.

**II. The nature of sympathy with ministers of the gospel is described.**—2. It may be small in quantity. 2. It may be exhibited by any one. 3. It must be from regard to Christ.

**III. The reward of sympathy with gospel ministers is pledged.**—1. It will be substantial acknowledgment. 2. It will be personally enjoyed. 3. It is Divinely assured.—*B. D. Johns.*

*"Ye belong to Christ.*—1. Proprietor-

ship. We are all Christ's—(1) By creation. (2) By redemption. (3) By baptism. 2. Privilege. (1) Special care. (2) Identity of interests. (3) High dignity. 3. Responsibility. (1) To live for Christ. (2) To live like Christ. (3) To confess Christ.—*R. Roberts.*

*The reward for Christian service.*—The action is worthy and rewardable, and shall therefore obtain reward. Not that there is anything in it that should or could be erected on a high pedestal of merit. But, being right and good, God will smile on it.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

# MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 42—50.

(PARALLEL: MATT. xviii. 6-9.)

Vers. 42-48. *Offences.*—"The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." It seems as though the contrast was suggested. I think it was. But men make a tremendous mistake if they imagine that gentleness means weakness, or that only in obtrusive terribleness comes a revelation of strength. The speech of Jesus is the mightiest utterance the world has ever heard. The law of life and love, the call to righteousness which He delivered, is the most awfully soul-searching, all-encompassing, fiery word which has ever reached the listening ears and beating hearts of men. The only salvation worth the having is a salvation unto God. A purpose which alone satisfies Him as being worthy of the Infinite Father is to renew His own image in His children, and make us like unto Himself.

**I. Christian life is a thorough consecration.**—Anything less than this turns religion into a dismal burden. But this makes its face to shine with the very glory of God, and its power comes to us as an uplifting joy, a thrilling inspiration; thy whole self, body, mind, heart, soul, hallowed, consecrated, dedicated. What do you think of it? This is to be, this is the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. High, great, difficult, beyond our capacity. Yes, and therefore comes the salvation from the everlasting, Almighty One. He is able and He is patient. What He begins He can complete. Our world of weak, erring, human life has known one Being who maintained a complete, supreme, unswerving consecration. He is the Saviour of men. He inbreathes His life; His mind, His spirit, may be in us. Men have felt His spell and realised His power. His promise has been so far known to be a great reality that it brought faith enough to a disciple to say, "We shall be like Him."

**II.** Now it will be evident, if we pause to think, that, as the sphere of our being rises, dangers and hindrances will come, which lower down may not be so obtrusive. There can be no question as to desires, passions, activities, words, deeds, thoughts, which are wrong in themselves. The Christian has no business with them. The right eye, the right hand, are not wrong things. They are good faculties, good energies, which are a splendid gift for consecrated use. The advice of the fanatic or the coward is, "Destroy the sense, blind it, muffle it,



for in it lies a danger"; and out of that have come all the austerities of the ascetic, all the inhumanity of the Stoic, but with no real redemption. The advice of the presumptuous fatalist is, "Withhold not thy heart from any joy; you are not responsible for your weakness or your passion"; and out of that have come the degradation of men, the fierce and terrible lines which sensual sin brands upon the sinner's face. In the one extreme a man tries to have nothing to pray for; in the other he dares to pray for the working of a miracle in aid of wrong. We must avoid both presumption and distrust. Broadly speaking, I suppose the eye may stand for that which is beautiful, pleasurable, and the hand for that which is active and energetic; in a word, occupation and recreation, labour and luxury. These are wholesome, natural, essential, to our due being. Without them a man is manifestly maimed. But, says Jesus, it is better to be maimed than slain. The limb or the body, the organ or the whole self: can there be any question as to which? I have known men on what was said to be the way to fortune, who seemed to me to be stumbling on a footway like that outside Jerusalem, where the precipice overhung Gehenna. I have known men, said to be ruined, from whom God had mercifully cut away the peril of their soul.

**III. But Jesus here, as always, lays His appeal upon conscience.**—This alone would have made Him solitary among all leaders and teachers. He clears conscience from its shadow, and says, "Look to its light"—your own conscience, not another man's. You have no business with the hands and eyes of others; you have great business with your own. Looking unto Jesus, you will not be led astray. Maintaining communion with Him, conscience will be lustrous and clear. Cling to Him, your Saviour. Obey His voice, your Lord.—*D. J. Hamer.*

Ver. 50. *The salt of Christian profession.*—"Salt is good." The wise son of Sirach says, "The principal things for the whole of a man's life are water, fire, iron, and salt"; after which follow in their turn "flour of wheat, honey, milk and the blood of the grape, and oil, and clothing." Amongst the good things of this present life—the natural productions which the Giver of all good has caused to exist for the use and benefit of His creatures—we may surely reckon a condiment so indispensable to health and enjoyment. Yes, "salt is good"; and it cannot lose its goodness or usefulness so long as it is salt.

**I. In the symbolical language of Scripture, salt is applied in several ways, according to its various uses and properties.**—1. The first and most obvious of all is derived from its seasoning property. Salt makes savoury and palatable that which has no taste of its own (Job vi. 6). Divine grace communicates a similar relish to everything in which it may be said to form an ingredient—to every part of the life and conversation of him who is under its influence, but especially to his familiar discourse. Hence the apostolic admonition (Col. iv. 6). And to this same seasoning virtue our Lord Himself alludes when He says to His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth"—as if all that is in the world were utterly tasteless and unpalatable in the judgment of truth until seasoned and as it were leavened with the holy doctrines and pure principles of Christianity. "But if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it?" What other more powerful or more salutary religion remains behind to renovate the enfeebled energies of a corrupt and degenerate Christianity? 2. This article entering so largely into the arrangements of the table, especially in the more simple forms of society, we need not be surprised to find it sometimes put for food in general. To "eat a person's salt" carries with it among Eastern nations the same idea as with us "to eat a person's bread," i.e. to be in his domestic service or otherwise employed by him at a salary (a term which derived its

origin from the Latin word for salt). See Ezra iv. 14, text and margin. Hence also salt became a symbol of hospitality and friendship; and an Arab of the present day regards every one who has *eaten salt with him* as his sworn friend and brother, whom he is bound on all occasions to protect. Connected with this idea is the custom of eating a few grains of salt at the ratification of covenants. See Num. xviii. 19; Lev. ii. 13. 3. But that which is ever so good in moderation and in its proper place may without those conditions be turned into the sorest of evils. "Salt is good"; but when it covers the whole face of the country, and the husbandman sees nothing around him but "brimstone and salt and burning" (Deut. xxix. 23), this most useful commodity becomes another word for barrenness and desolation. See Jer. xvii. 6; Ps. cvii. 34, margin. To this head may probably be referred the custom of *sowing salt* (Judg. ix. 45) in a place which was intended to be devoted to perpetual desolation.

11. Whereas this substance is used to season others, we know of no other which can be made use of to impart a savour to salt.—*Inspid salt* may therefore be regarded as another name for whatever is useless and valueless, not in its own nature, but as being devoid of those very properties in which its excellence consists. 1. Salt that has lost its saltiness may fitly represent a religious profession which does not influence the conduct. The profession of religion is good. It is good to see a man framing his life, arranging his habits, ordering his family, on the supposition that "God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." It is good to see him entering into his closet, and shutting the door and praying to his Father which seeth in secret. It is good to see him coming forth from his private devotions, and summoning his family to join with him in domestic worship. It is good to see him and them in the Lord's house on the Lord's Day, and especially at the altar to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood. All these things are good, for the same reason that salt is good—because of their aptitude to impregnate and season other things, all things, in fact, with which they are mixed up. This is the proper virtue and natural operation of a man's religious profession; the whole life ought to taste of it. But, alas, how seldom is this so! How few are there amongst the multitude of professing Christians who in the common concerns of life think and speak and act differently from those who are openly living without God in the world! 2. Salt that has lost its saltiness may also fitly represent a Christian who does no good to others. Just as the use of salt is to season not itself but other things which either have no savour of their own or an unpleasant one, so the use of Christianity is to season an ungodly and unbelieving world with the truths and principles of pure and undefiled religion. This can only be accomplished by the exertions of individual Christians, each seeking the good and promoting the eternal salvation of all who come within the circle of his influence. "This," says Chrysostom, "is the definition of Christianity—to care for the salvation of others. Nothing is so frivolous and insipid as a Christian who does not save others." And yet there are many who seem to understand that text, "Work out your own salvation," in the same way as if they had been told to mind their own business and not to trouble themselves about the religious state of others. They *do* work out their own salvation, at least according to their views of the method of working it. They are zealous towards God, diligent in the performance of religious duties, strict moralists, and blameless in all the common duties and relations of life. Thus they may be said to "have salt in themselves." But how do they realise that other and higher requirement, to be "the salt of the earth"? Where are their seasoning qualities? Wherein does such a man "please his neighbour for his good to edification"? Does he "command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord"? Does he seek the good of the city where

he dwells, doing all in his power to discountenance wickedness and vice, and to season that locality with which he is more immediately connected, with the salt of true religion and virtue? Do his efforts reach forth beyond the narrow limits and petty concerns of a single locality? and does he cast in his mite of salt to the general stock which is employed in seasoning, converting, and evangelising the world? 3. What has been said of the duty of all Christians to seek the spiritual good of others applies in the highest degree to the priesthood of the Church. Insipid salt is but a feeble illustration of the character of a careless and unfaithful "minister of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God"—as to be "cast out and trodden underfoot of men" but faintly shadows forth his inevitable doom.

III. **Improvement under religious advantages depends in a great measure upon ourselves.**—"The Word preached," be it ever so highly seasoned, will not profit unless it be "mixed with faith in them that hear it." "Salt is good"; but there are some substances so utterly corrupt and stinking as to bid defiance to its correcting and preserving power. We Christian preachers are, according to St. Paul, "a sweet savour of Christ," etc. (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16). The salt is the same; its natural properties are the same; but, being applied to one, it preserves him from corruption and seasons him for the kingdom of heaven; while, being sprinkled on another, it salts him as a sacrifice to be offered up to the Divine vengeance, and makes him indestructible only for the worm that dieth not, and the fire that cannot be quenched, until the man's heart is humbled to the dust and he cries aloud for mercy to the God whose grace he has heretofore spurned. If therefore ye would escape the agonies of hell, "take heed what ye hear" and "how ye hear." "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word," etc. "Give no place to the devil," who is ever watching his opportunity to "take away the Word out of your hearts," etc. "Keep yourselves unspotted from the world," which is always at hand with its contaminating influence, "the cares and riches and pleasures of this life," to choke the Word and make it unfruitful. And finally, pray constantly to God to give you more and more of that "honest and good heart," which "having heard the Word keeps it and brings forth fruit with patience."

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 42-48. *Self-control and self-denial.*—The whole passage is steeped in metaphor. No one is expected to take the *scandal* or trap of vers. 42, 43, 45 literally, or the *ass-millstone* or the *flinging into the sea*, or the *Gehenna*. Why, then, should we insist on taking literally either the *hand* or the *foot* of these verses, or even the *inextinguishable fire*? The principle which underlies them is, that a man had far better part with, lose, sacrifice, anything and everything else, however good it may be in itself or however dear, than suffer himself to be hindered in that service of truth and goodness in which he finds his true life, or that fidelity to Christ in which eternal life consists. It is

not by mutilating the body, but only by a wise and resolute self-control, a wise and resolute rule of our own spirit, that we can maintain our loyalty to Him, and walk with even and steadfast foot in His ways. And if we find *that* in ourselves which hinders or makes us stumble in these ways, He would have us know that, unless we freely renounce it, there is that both in the righteousness and in the love of God which will kindle on it like a fire, and burn it out of us; yes, and burn *us* until we let it go.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

*Destruction of evil.*—The point to which our Lord really directs our thoughts is, that all that is evil in us, however closely it sits to the heart,



must be destroyed; that not only in a future world of woe—which we might just as truly depict as all millstone and sea, as all worm and fire—but here and now, as well as then and there, the righteousness and love of God will burn against all unrighteousness of men, burn more keenly and inwardly and consumingly than any fire; that all in us which exalts itself against Him or stands in the way of our own perfection, or militates against the welfare of the world, will infallibly expose us to a discipline more dreadful and agonising than metaphor can convey or imagination conceive. The severity is part of the goodness of God.—*Ibid.*

*Something better than acrimony.*—Instead of acrimony against those who follow not with us, let us bend all our anger and resentment, all our bitterness and hostility, against our own lusts and sinful propensities, not sparing one of them, though they be as dear to us as the members of our bodies, as our hands, our feet, or our eyes, and however painful the amputation or mortification of them may be to us.—*C. Seymour.*

Ver. 42. *Skandala.*—When we learn that it was John's repulse of the man who had cast out demons which set our Lord on this theme, a light is thrown on the particular meaning of the word "skandala," which I think was in our Lord's mind—that, viz., of the checking others on their way to good, the throwing back on itself of the enthusiasm or warm affection which was beginning to flow, and the choking up of the heartsprings thereby. The man who had been casting out demons and was turned back because he did not follow with the apostles might have asked, "Would the scribes and Pharisees have treated me worse?" The revulsion might deaden his spiritual life.—*H. Latham.*

*Stumbling-blocks.*—To go where we should not go, to do what we should not do, to touch what we should not touch with hand or eye, tongue or foot,

is to set one of these traps in motion. To lie in wait on any honest path, to forbid or condemn any good action, movement, teaching, to hinder men, to trip them up, to hold them back, when they are bent on the service of truth or going on any errand of mercy, is to be such a trap: it is to scandalise or set them stumbling. Better to die, better even to be *hanged*, than to become a trap, a drag, in the service of truth and goodness: a defender of the faith, for example, who, honestly intending its defence, nevertheless opposes its growth, retards, or even blights, its springing and germinant powers. The most capable and eminent servants of the truth in all ages have had to waste half their strength in breaking through these traps and snares. Don't you be one of these traps, or even the *tongue* of a trap.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

*We offend Christ's little ones* every time we give them, in place of gospel bread, the stones of human philosophy; or, in place of the nourishment of simple faith in Christ, the sting of some abstraction about which sectaries quarrel.

*Where in our Lord's teachings do you find stronger words than these?*—He never denounced murder or unchastity or malice of any kind in stronger terms, and the reason is not far to seek. He who deliberately puts the occasion of falling in the way of Christ's little ones is really committing a heinous sin; it is murder and suicide combined, for while he injures the soul of him who is weak and helpless, he is really destroying all that is pure and Christlike in his own nature.

Vers. 43-48. *The awfulness of hell.*—In this and other passages Christ speaks of hell in terms far more solemn and terrible than any other prophet or messenger of God has done. Why is this? 1. Because He is emphatically the teacher of God's truth in its fullest form, without reservation or concealment. 2. Because He alone has perfect knowledge on the subject of the

eternal world. 3. Because of His infinite love. He paints hell in all its awfulness, to induce men to flee from the wrath to come and to seek refuge in Him.

*Precautions against evil.*—What precautions do we not take to avoid an infectious air, and to prevent a contagious distemper from spreading? How much greater reason have we to shun those persons who are to us an occasion of sin, were they, on the account of their advice, protection, and assistance, as dear to us as our hands, our feet, and our eyes? How much more still ought we to cut off all criminal, unprofitable, and dangerous use of our senses, our mind, and our body?—*P. Quesnel*.

Ver. 44. *The worm of remorse.*—Who can conceive the torment of this gnawing worm, namely, of the eternal reproach of conscience, when a man shall reflect upon the graces and mercies of God which he has despised, and on the preference he has made of the shadow of a momentary happiness, before a substantial and eternal good, which is God Himself?—*Ibid.*

Ver. 45. *The cutting off of the foot* is the breaking off all commerce with the world by a holy retirement, whenever it becomes necessary to salvation. To quit the occasions of falling is not a counsel of perfection, but a necessary duty, since salvation depends upon it.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 49. *The true sacrificial fire* of self-denial and self-mortification in relation to the fiery flame of hell. 1. The relation: all must be salted with fire. 2. The contrast: to be prepared for the fire by salt, or to be salted with fire.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*The two fires.*—We cannot escape the fire; but we have the choice between the fire of life and the fire of death.—*Ibid.*

*Learn*—1. Christians ought to be as spiritual sacrifices or oblations offered up to God in this life. 2. The

ministry of the Word ought to be as salt to season men for God, and fit for His use and service. 3. As salt, being of a hot and dry nature, is apt to bite and fret the raw skin or flesh, so the Word of God, preached and applied to men's consciences, is apt to cause pain and grief.—*G. Petter*.

Ver. 50. *Saltless salt.*—Three times, in different connexions, this proverb is recorded in Christ's teaching, in each case in reference to the failure of that which was excellent and hopeful. In St. Matthew it is applied generally to the influence of His new people on the world; in St. Mark to the danger to ourselves of the careless or selfish use of our personal influence; in St. Luke to the conditions of sincere discipleship. But in all cases it contemplates the possible failure of religion to do its perfect work.—*Dean Church*.

*Deterioration.*—There is such a thing as moral and spiritual decay—in standard, motive, devotion, sacrifice, goodness. What are the signs of it? 1. A lowered and attenuated ideal. Christ has little by little become almost a personal stranger. We have not consciously renounced Him, but have lagged so far behind in the journey that He is quite out of our sight and reach. 2. A growing indifference to all great enterprise for Christ. 3. A deepening indifference to truth for its own sake, though not infrequently accompanied with an augmenting fierceness of controversy and a spirit of partisanship in contending with those on the other side. Few forms of self-deceit are more treacherous or more hardening than that which thinks to contend for the truth without love. 4. Inconsistency in the use and enjoyment of what we understand by earthly and worldly things. To aim at both worlds is usually to end in enjoying neither.—*Bishop Thorold*.

*True savour.*—If we merely have the salt of good doctrine, without having the true savour and seasoning of personal godliness, we may become utterly worthless—like the waters of

the "Dead Sea," so called, whose waters receive a large quantity of salt, but which, by remaining stagnant, become so dense that nothing can live or grow in them.—*S. Jenner.*

*Christians the salt of the earth.*—It is for the best welfare of every nation and city on the face of the earth that the children of God should be in it, not merely for its spiritual welfare, but even that the blessing of God may descend upon it in earthly matters, the hand of God guiding and directing it. It is for the best interests both of this life and of the life to come that the children of God should pervade the earth from one end to another, and that the blessing of God should rest upon all men for their sakes. No doubt in the process of thus spreading through the earth the children of God may be persecuted and harassed and vexed; death may be their portion; their earthly goods may be spoiled at the hands of ungodly men; they may suffer for their faithfulness to Christ

and to His cause. Are they not the liker to the salt which perishes in the very using, and is crushed into extinction simply by doing its work in the world? Let them be scattered abroad, therefore, come of them what may; and then, when the gospel shall have been preached in all the nations of the world, when there is something of this salt of the earth scattered everywhere, then we are told the end shall come, the world shall be ready for its blessing, ready for the presence of its God, ready to become the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.—*A. Melvill, D.D.*

*Peace without, from purity within.*—The meaning of the last clause in this verse is, that the strongest personal character is quite consistent with the gentlest Christian temper and behaviour. Christ intends to say, that His disciples not only may be calm and decided too; but that, if they are true ones, that is just what they will be.—*S. Rickards.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IX.

*Ver. 2. Doxologies to God for the mountains.*—In their mineral treasures, in the liberal toll taken from the clouds and disbursed in channels of blessing, in their worldwide sanitary influence, felt where unseen, what a boon are they to men! Often have they given friendly shelter to the hunted spirit of liberty. They have made a higher civilisation possible. They have quickened desire for the same by furnishing so largely the needed instruments of agriculture, manufacture, commerce, and the arts. How vivifying and ennobling the influence which their beauty, variety, sublimity, repose, and strength exercise upon the minds and hearts of men! Rich and varied is the inheritance of the high and holy in intellectual, moral, and spiritual things which but for the mountains would be unenjoyed by men. In a thousand ways how the "everlasting hills" help men upward nearer heaven and God! They are the cathedral spires of the world for ever pointing the nations to the things above. Streams of physical, intellectual, political, moral, and spiritual good have enriched human life through its relations with the everlasting hills.—*W. M. Campbell.*

*Christ's transfiguration.*—I have stood by the side of the tall mast in Madison Square, New York, at early evening, wondering at the unique and surprising structure, recognising it as something extraordinary, and yet not knowing exactly what it meant or what was its effect, when suddenly the rushing of an unseen force was heard, there was a flash, and a circle of fire surrounded the top of the mast and cast its weird light far out into the surrounding darkness. So to the disciples on the mount came the transfiguration of Christ. He stood before them in the impressiveness of a rare and wonderful Manhood, when suddenly that Manhood glowed with an internal fire. God was within the Man, and the mountain summit became on the instant resplendent with the Divine glory flashing forth.—*A. P. Foster.*

*Ver. 3. The beauty of the snow.*—The white wonder of the snow is spread so often before our eyes every winter that many of us forget how wonderful and how beautiful it is. With impatience and fretful complainings we look up at the threatening sky, where the grey clouds drive before the wind thick with the coming snow.



Presently the delicate crystals, star-shaped, feather-soft, white and sparkling, begin to fall as silently as the slipped foot of Time; at first coming down slowly and timidly, then gathering courage, and whirling down as if in delight at their own beauty. No fewer than ninety-six separate exquisite forms have been discerned among the flakes of the snow, every form as perfect as geometry can imagine or the sculptor's art devise.—*Dr. Talmage.*

Vers. 5, 6. *Religious enthusiasm cannot be detained.*—I have seen in the little English city of Salisbury the great cathedral. It was built when a flood-tide of religious enthusiasm was sweeping over the world. Thousands might worship, thousands have worshipped, within that splendid fane, and its walls were not able to contain the great flood of devotion. But the tide has ebbed; the ecstatic vision has faded. The mighty cathedral stands; but a handful of worshippers can scarcely keep a sleepy rivulet of praise flowing in a corner of the building. No tabernacle can detain a moment of religious enthusiasm; and if Peter and his friends had built the grandest cathedral in the world on the ridge of Mount Hermon, it might have been empty and bare to-day.—*H. Van Dyke, D.D.*

Ver. 8. *Jesus only.*—When Bishop Beve-ridge was on his death-bed, his memory so failed that he did not know even his nearest relative. His chaplain said, "Do you know me?" "Who are you?" was the answer. His own wife asked him, "Do you know me?" "Who are you?" was the only answer. On being told that it was his wife he said that he did not know her. Then one standing by said, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" "Jesus Christ?" he replied, re-lying as if the name acted on him like a cordial; "yes, I have known Him these forty years; He is my only hope."

Ver. 19. *Lack of faith.*—Admiral Dupont was once explaining to Farragut the reason why he failed to enter Charlestown harbour with his fleet of ironclads. He gave this reason, and that reason, and the other reason; and Farragut remained silent until he had got through, and then said, "Ah, Dupont, there was one more reason." "What is that?" "You didn't believe you could do it!"

Vers. 23, 24. *The use of weak faith.*—When the suspension bridge across Niagara was erected, a kite took a string over to the other side; to this string a cord was at-tached and was drawn over, then a rope which drew a larger rope, and then a cable strong enough to sustain the iron cable which supported the bridge, over which

heavily laden trains now pass in safety. This could never have been done but for the small kite, which may represent a faith which, though weak, yet reaches to Christ and heaven.

*Little faith in a great God.*—There was once a woman who was well known for her simple faith and great calmness in the midst of many trials. Another woman hear-ing of her, went to learn the secret of her holy, happy life. She accosted her by say-ing, "Are you the woman with the great faith?" "No," she replied, "I am not the woman with the great faith; but I am the woman with a little faith in the great God."

Ver. 24. *Obedience has a firm basis.*—The same state of mind, looked at from its two opposite ends, as it were, may be designated faith or unbelief; just as a piece of shot silk, according to the angle at which you hold it, may shew you only the bright colours of its warp or the dark ones of its weft. When you are travelling in a railway train with the sun streaming in at the windows, if you look out on the one hand you will see the illumined face of every tree and blade of grass and house, and if you look out on the other you will see the dark side. And so the same landscape may seem to be all lit up by the sunshine of belief, or to be darkened by the gloom of distrust. If we consider how great and how perfect ought to be our obedience, to bear any due proportion to the firmness of that upon which it is built, we shall not be slow to believe that through life there will always be the presence, more or less, of these two elements. There will be all degrees of pro-gress between the two extremes of infantile and mature faith.—*A. MacLaren, D.D.*

*Fluctuations of faith.*—Travelling on the plain, which, notwithstanding, has its risings and fallings, I discovered Salisbury steeple many miles off; coming to a declivity, I lost the sight thereof, but, climbing up the next hill, the steeple grew out of the ground again. Yea, I often found it and lost it, till at last I came safely to it, and took my lodgings near it. It fareth thus with us while we are wayfaring to heaven. Mounted on the Pisgah top of some good meditation, we get a glimpse of our celestial Canaan; but when either on the flat of an ordinary temper, or in the fall of an extraordinary temptation, we lose the view thereof. Thus, in the sight of our soul, heaven is discovered, covered, and recovered; till, though late, at last, though slowly, surely, we arrive at the haven of our happiness.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Ver. 29. *Prayer.*—I once went to see Channing at Newport, and he told me that a minister had been to see him that day, and had told how he had once been called in to exorcise a madman. The man was in

a paroxysm; but his friends had an idea that it could be relieved by prayer. The minister, himself a man of simple faith, could not refuse the request, and went into the room where the maniac was, took him by the hand, and said, "Let us kneel down and pray." He said that he never prayed so sincerely in all his life. When he began, the man's muscles were like iron; as he went on, they gradually relaxed, and when he finished the maniac was quiet and peaceful. Channing thought, and I think, that the strong faith of the minister acted on the patient's body, through his mind.—*J. F. Clarke.*

*Fasting.*—Some years ago, an excellent, well-meaning clergyman preached during Lent on the duty of fasting, which he clearly proved from Scripture. But having done this, he proceeded to discount all he had said by making a series of exceptions. The working-man, for instance, could not be expected to fast, for he had his work to do; the weak and sickly were excepted because of their health, the children on account of their tender years, the old on account of their age, the brain-worker because of the severity of intellectual labour, etc. Doubtless there is some truth in all this, but the answer lies in the word "abstinence." Many who are unable to fast literally can do so spiritually by taking plain food and avoiding luxuries and self-indulgence. And we should ever look beyond ourselves, and make our self-denial of benefit to others. A good old lady used to have her plateful of meat, cut off from the joint at dinner-time, set aside whilst she ate her dry bread, and then putting it in her basket she would hurry off with it to some poor, sick person in the neighbourhood.

Ver. 31. *Christ's knowledge of His future.*—Christ deals with His future as men deal with their past. This is entirely different from these mere presentiments of death which are sometimes, no doubt, as extraordinary as they are pathetic. A brave officer is ordered abroad for a campaign. On his voyage out his heart turns to his family, to his wife and children. After he lands, before going into action, he writes tender words in the light of an eternal world. They reach us when the hand is cold that traced the lines, when the eyes are closed that were half blinded with the salt mist of love. We read the presentiment into a prophecy, the felt probability into a certainty. Yet, in truth, such anticipations are generally vague enough. Hundreds have written such letters for whom they have not been fulfilled. It was not so with Christ. In the army of the greatest of all human captains there was a regiment, at the head of whose list was the name of one brave soldier, called first whenever the roll was called, with the ad-

dition of "killed upon the field of battle." So stood the name of the Son of God in His own hearing every day of His life.—*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*

Ver. 35. *Humility.*—St. Augustine being asked, "What is the first thing in religion?" replied, "Humility." "And what is the second?" "Humility." "And what the third?" "Humility." Benjamin Franklin, when young, received this advice, when, on going out of a house by a shorter way, he hit his head against a beam: "You are young, and have the world before you; stoop as you go through it, and you will miss many hard thumps."

Ver. 36. Our blessed religion looks upon children as immortal creatures, full of beauty. It is by no means a matter of course that children are respected. Look at the social contempt in which Mahometan children are held. Look at the random influence of the infidel's child. The atheist may indeed treat his child after the Christian custom of the land he lives in; but at the bottom of his creed the child is a mere perishing brute. Listen to the shrill shriek that comes from the fiery altar of Moloch, and the splash on the banks of the Ganges. Look at China's infanticide, and the blood on the Juggernaut's wheel. Then look at Christendom's child enthroned—enthroned in the church, in the home, in the school, in Christian art, and in the Christmas festival.

Ver. 37. *Christ in His little ones.*—The legend of St. Christopher is told in various ways, but one version is that, being a humble ferryman on the banks of a turbulent river, he heard one dark and stormy night a child's voice outside his hut, asking to be carried across the river. Simply doing his duty, he took the wailing little one in his arms and breast the swollen torrent; but before he had gone far his burden was surrounded with a halo of light, and he found that it was no ordinary child but the Christ-child, and that in performing his humble duty he had the unspeakable honour of carrying the Lord of Glory, and on this account his name was changed to Christopher, "the Christ-bearer." This is no mere legend. It embodies an experience possible to every Christian. Whoever lovingly and patiently cares for one of Christ's little ones will find his burden growing blessedly light, and he will realise the joy not only of rescuing the perishing, but of bearing the Christ perpetually in his heart.

*Reverence to childhood.*—John Locke drank into the spirit of our Lord's teaching when he wrote this maxim: "Maxima debetur pueris reverentia" ("The greatest reverence is owed to children"). At Eisenach a famous master, John Trebonius, was

rector of the convent of the Barefooted Carmelites; and when he taught his classes of boys there, he always did so with his head uncovered, to honour, as he said, the consuls, chancellors, doctors, and masters who would one day proceed from his school. There was reverence to youth! And not in vain was it shewn, for among his scholars was that highly honoured servant of God Martin Luther, who was greater than all the consuls, chancellors, and doctors of his time. When Edward Irving was at the height of his power as an orator in London, some ladies, who had established an infant school in the district of Billingsgate, and were unsuccessful in persuading the people to send their children to it, applied to him to help them. He immediately consented, and went with them through the district. In the first house he allowed the ladies to explain their errand, and they did it very offensively to the poor, so full of condescension and patronage was their manner. In the second house Irving took the place of spokesman upon himself. When the door was opened, he spoke in the kindest tone to the woman who opened it, and asked permission to go in. He then explained the intentions of the ladies, asked how many children she had, and whether she would send them. A ready consent was the result; and the mother's heart was completely won when the visitor took one of her little ones on his knee, and blessed her. The ladies who were engaged in this work were horrified. "Why, Mr. Irving," exclaimed one of the ladies, when they got to the street, "you spoke to that woman as if she were doing you a favour, and not you conferring one on her! How could you speak so? and how could you take up that child on your knee?" "The woman," he replied, "does not as yet know the advantages which her children will derive from your school; by-and-by she will know them, and own her obligations to you; and in so speaking and in blessing her child I do but follow the example of our Lord, who blessed the little ones, the lambs of His flock." Edward Irving's conception of a child is given in these words: "a glorious bud of being." He had a high appreciation of a child. He saw grand possibilities hidden away in its undeveloped capacities. He saw the promise of a new world in its being devoted to God, and blessed by Christ. But we must not forget this: Irving, like Trebonius, was a seer. And might not all be seers if they would only do as he did, accept Christ's estimate of children?

*Begin with the children.*—Dr. Duff, the missionary to India, began his work there on a principle altogether new in missionary enterprise. He began with the children. With the eye and heart of a philosopher, as he was—a Christian philosopher—he saw

that, if he could gain the children, the coming generations would be gained. In the words of Sir Charles Trevelyan: "Up to that time *preaching* had been considered the orthodox regular mode of missionary action; but Dr. Duff held that the receptive, plastic minds of children might be moulded from the first according to the Christian system, to the exclusion of all heathen teaching, and that the best preaching to the rising generation, which soon becomes the entire people, is the 'line upon line, precept upon precept' of the schoolroom." This action of Dr. Duff recalls the action of the Spartans, who, when Antipater demanded fifty children as hostages, offered him in their stead a hundred men of distinction. One would have thought this by far the noblest offer, but there was a far-seeing wisdom in it. In the children there was hope of retrieving their loss, and wiping out their dishonour. Their fathers had lost the day, the children might regain it. In them Sparta would flourish anew.

Ver. 40. *Friends mistaken for enemies.*—A sailor once told me that the most terrible engagement he had ever been in was one between the ship to which he belonged and another English vessel, when, on meeting in the night, they mistook each other for enemies. Several persons were wounded, and both vessels were much damaged by the firing. When the day broke, great and painful was the surprise to find the English flag hoisted from both ships. They saluted each other, and wept bitterly together over their mistake. Christians, sometimes, commit the same error. One denomination mistakes another for an enemy; it is night, and they do not recognise one another. What will be their surprise when they see each other in heaven's light! How will they salute each other when better known and understood!—*W. Williams.*

Ver. 41. *Common life sublime.*—In the universe filled with Christ, the falling sparrow is to the thoughtful Christian as impressive as the stars fighting in their courses. Grandly does that profound Christian thinker and poet, Sidney Lanier, in his development of the English novel, show how Christ has made even common life sublime. Maggie Tulliver, amid the details of humble routine, now wins our sympathies as much as does *Œdipus*. We have learned the gospel of details. What need have we of all the complex machinery of Greek tragedy when we know that God sees, knows, pities, and Christ has blessed even the cup of cold water? Like the Divine flood in Ezekiel's vision of the ankle-deep rill swelling into the lordly river, so this beatitude of refreshment to the needy has made increase of the cup to a flood that



has quenched the thirst of millions through eighteen centuries. The well and the fountain built in Christ's name, the medicine to assuage fever, the kindly ministrations of the nurse and the hospital, the reforms of the Christian ages, are but the magnified results of the truth taught by our Lord and made vital in the lives of His people.

*Cup of cold water.*—When Sir Philip Sidney, after being wounded at the battle of Zutphen, was retiring to the camp, he was almost overcome by the oppressive heat. Calling for a drink of water, a soldier with great difficulty procured him one. Just as he was raising it to his lips, a wounded soldier was borne by, who turned his eyes wistfully towards the cooling draught. Instantly passing the bottle down to him he said, "Thy necessity is greater than mine."

Ver. 42. *Wrong done to a child.*—One of the most pathetic stories of the wrong done to children is, to my mind, that which a good man tells of his own childhood more than a hundred and fifty years ago. It was a Scotch Communion Sunday, and amidst the crowd who thronged to that solemn ordinance there came a boy of eight who managed to pass unnoticed into the church. He heard a part of the minister's address, and tells us that he commended Christ in so sweet and delightful a manner that his heart was captivated. But just then a stern official caught sight of the young intruder, and indignantly bade him go out of the sanctuary, as though he had been some leprous Uzziah, instead of one of the lambs of Christ's flock. The Church has not thought it worth while to preserve in grateful memory the name of that austere upholder of ecclesiastical discipline, but the boy he excommunicated lived to ennoble one of the commonest of common names, for he is known to us and to many as the saintly John Brown, of Haddington.

Ver. 44. *Future punishment.*—Men in these times seem unwilling to hear of future punishment. They talk as if "a certain class of preachers" invented hell and kept it burning to enforce their precepts. I was in Naples in 1884, the year that cholera was epidemic. The Neapolitans accused the physicians of bringing the cholera. The physicians predicted it; they told the people that unless they cleaned up their city the scourge would come. They laid down rules and gave warning. So when the cholera came, the people thought the physicians brought it to intimidate them into washing themselves and keeping their back yards clean, so they threw stones at the physicians and drove them out of the city. These physicians had come to risk their lives for the ungrateful people who

rejected them. Thus when preachers begin to talk of the scourge which will follow sin, the people—that is, some of them—begin to think the preachers are in some way responsible for this scourge. The preachers are assailed as cruel, fanatical, behind the times, and all that. Our Lord is a physician. He came and found the disease of sin and its fatal consequences here already. He did not bring them. He left His home to improve the sanitary condition of this world, to cleanse its filth. And in order to induce men to submit to His treatment, He warns them to flee from the wrath to come.—*R. S. Barrett.*

*"Worm that dieth not."*—It has been discovered that there are worms which eat and live upon stone. Many such have been found in a freestone wall in Normandy. So there is a worm in hell—conscience—which lives upon the stony heart of the condemned sinners.

*Hell in the present life.*—A man may be in hell here as well as hereafter. No more striking illustration can be supplied than that of Lady Macbeth. After the murder of Banquo she cannot rest. She rises from her bed and walks about. She rubs and rubs, as if washing her hands, and continues it for a quarter of an hour. She fancies she sees a spot of blood on them. She cannot take it out; her hands will not be clean, and she cries, "Here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh! oh! oh!"

Ver. 47. *Danger prevented.*—A blind man was once asked whether he had no desire that his sight should be restored to him; he answered boldly, "No; because Jesus says, 'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.' God probably saw that mine eyes would offend me, so as to endanger my soul, and so He has prevented this great evil by plucking them out Himself; and I thank Him for it."

Ver. 50. *Salt losing its savour.*—A merchant of Sidon, having farmed of the government the revenue from the importation of salt, brought over an immense quantity from the marshes of Cyprus—enough, in fact, to supply the whole province for at least twenty years. This he transferred to the mountains, to cheat the government out of some small percentage. Sixty-five houses were rented and filled with salt. These houses had merely earthen floors, and the salt next the ground in a few years entirely spoiled. I saw large quantities of it literally thrown into the street, to be trodden underfoot of men and beasts. It was "good for nothing."—*Wm. Thomson, D.D.*

*Salt and peace.*—Every one who has sojourned in the East has some story to tell of the sacredness attached by Arabs

to a compact which has been ratified by salt; how the man who one day would have plundered you of all will the next day sacrifice everything he values, if need be, in the meantime you have tasted his salt. Some think that in this verse our Lord refers to this well-known fact. An unseemly quarrel had taken place amongst His disciples: "What was it that ye disputed amongst yourselves by the way? But they

held their peace; for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be greatest." The very children of the desert teach the disciples a lesson. They had been brought "into the bond of the covenant"; they had eaten of the "king's salt"; had been "salted with the salt of the palace" (Ezra iv. 14). How can they dispute who are bound by the most solemn obligations to perpetual amity and love?

## CHAPTER X.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **He arose from thence.**—Between the events just recorded and those of which the Evangelist now proceeds to treat many others had occurred, which he passes over. The most important of these were: 1. The visit of Christ to Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 8-10), which was marked by—(1) The rebuke to the "Sons of Thunder" at the churlish conduct of the inhabitants of a Samaritan village on their way to the Holy City (Luke ix. 51-56); (2) Solemn discourses during the feast, and an attempt of the Sanhedrin to apprehend Him (John vii. 11-52, viii. 12-59); (3) The opening of the eyes of one born blind (John ix. 1-41), the revelation of Himself as the Good Shepherd (John x. 1-18). 2. Ministrations in Judea and mission of the seventy (Luke x.-xiii. 17). 3. Visit to Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication (John x. 22-39). 4. Tour in Peræa (Luke xiii. 22-xvii. 10). 5. The raising of Lazarus (John xi. 1-46). 6. Resolve of the Sanhedrin to put Him to death, and His retirement to Ephraim (John xi. 47-54). **The coasts of Judea.**—The place whither He now retired has been identified with Ophrah, and was situated in the wide desert country north-east of Jerusalem, not far from Bethel, and on the confines of Samaria. Caspari would identify it with a place now called El-Faria, or El-Farah, about two hours north-east of Nablous.—*G. F. Maclear, D.D.*

Ver. 5. **For the hardness.**—*To meet*—in the way of concession or compromise.

Ver. 18. *No one is good except God.*

Ver. 21. **Loved.**—Possibly *caressed*. It is said to have been customary with Jewish Rabbis to kiss the head of such pupils as answered well. **Take up the cross.**—Omitted by N, B, C, D, Δ, and Vulg.

Ver. 22. **Was sad.**—*Turning gloomy*—his bright countenance becoming overshadowed as by a thunder-cloud—*he went away sorrowful: for he was in possession of many acquisitions*, which he could not bear to think of giving up.

Ver. 24. See R.V. text and margin.

Ver. 25. **It is easier for a camel.**—This is (as Dr. J. Morison aptly remarks) a fine, bold, hieroglyphic, hyperbolic way of speaking, that need impose on no one with a spark of poetry in his soul. The key to its import is hung at the girdle of common sense. Southey caught its spirit:—

"I would ride the camel,  
Yea, leap him flying, through the needle's eye,  
As easily as such a pampered soul  
Could pass the narrow gate."

"The text," he says, "is gospel-wisdom." The Saviour intended to represent vividly and memorably the extraordinary difficulty of discharging the responsibilities and overcoming the temptations of riches.

Ver. 30. **The world to come.**—*The age which is coming*—the Messianic or Christian era, which was inaugurated by the descent of the Holy Spirit—the Life-giver—on the Day of Pentecost. *Eternal life* begins now, in this present world of sense and time.

Ver. 40. See R.V. for last clause, which, however, may also be rendered *save to them for whom it is prepared* (made ready). "The throne is the prize of toils, not a grace granted to ambition."

Ver. 45. "The human blood of the Eternal Son was the ransom paid to God for our eternal

redemption from the curse of the law and from the wrath of God, and from the claims of Satan and from the power of sin." This "one offering, single and complete," when put in the balance *over against* the transgressions of *many*, proved sufficient to atone for all.

Vers. 46-52. See R.V. for several graphic touches obscured by A.V.

Ver. 51. **Rabboni**.—The highest title he could give, the gradations being Rab, Rabbi, Rabban, Rabboni. See John xx. 16.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—12.

(PARALLEL: MATT. xix. 1-12.)

*Lessons for preachers*.—This passage, which will hardly ever be required for public use, suggests some points which ought not to be neglected by the preacher.

I. **Jesus Christ taught**.—Ignorance was never approved by the Saviour. He saved through *light*, never through *darkness*. He conducted specific intellectual processes as well as processes distinctively moral. It was His delight to *simplify* truth.

II. **Jesus Christ taught the people**.—Not a particular class, but the people as a whole. His teaching was as impartial as the sunshine. This is the glory of Christian truth. It challenges all hearts in all ages and in all lands. It is a heavenly rain, not a local fountain.

III. **Jesus Christ honoured the holy teachers who had gone before Him** (ver. 3).—Truth is one. We find new phases, new applications, and the like; but truth is one, because *God* is one. This is our security amid all changes of ministers and teachers. In so far as the men have been true to God each can say, "What did my *predecessor* tell you?"

IV. **Jesus Christ honoured the tenderest relations of the present life** (vers. 7-9).—He did not ignore the present because of the future. He treated no vow with levity. He taught the whole law—the law of home, the law of society, the law of the Church: "There is one Lawgiver."—*J. Parker, D.D.*

*Marriage*.—1. That society is necessary to the happiness of human nature, that the gloom of solitude and the stillness of retirement, however they may flatter at a distance with pleasing views of independence and serenity, neither extinguish the passions nor enlighten the understanding, that discontent will intrude upon privacy and temptations follow us to the desert, every one may be easily convinced, either by his own experience or that of others. 2. It is a proof of the regard of God for the happiness of mankind that the means by which it must be attained are obvious and evident; that we are not left to discover them by difficult speculations, intricate disquisitions, or long experience, but are led to them equally by our passions and our reason, in prosperity and distress. 3. As a general relation to the rest of the species is not sufficient to procure gratifications for the private desires of particular persons, as closer ties of union are necessary to promote the separate interests of individuals, the great society of the world is divided into different communities, which are again subdivided into smaller bodies and more contracted associations, which pursue, or ought to pursue, a particular interest, in subordination to the public good, and consistently with the general happiness of mankind. 4. The lowest subdivision of society is that by which it is broken into private families; nor do any duties demand more to be explained and enforced than those which this relation produces, because none is more universally obligatory, and perhaps very few are more frequently neglected. 5. That marriage itself, an institution designed only for the promotion of happiness, and for the relief of the disappointments,



anxieties, and distresses, to which we are subject in our present state, does not always produce the effects for which it was appointed, that it sometimes condenses the gloom which it was intended to dispel, and increases the weight which was expected to be made lighter by it, must, however unwillingly, be yet acknowledged. 6. It is to be considered to what causes effects so unexpected and unpleasing, so contrary to the end of the institution, and so unlikely to arise from it, are to be attributed; it is necessary to inquire whether those that are thus unhappy are to impute their misery to any other cause than their own folly, and to the neglect of those duties which prudence and religion equally require.

**I. The nature and end of marriage.**—The vow of marriage, which the wisdom of most civilised nations has enjoined, and which the rules of the Christian Church enjoin, may be properly considered as a vow of perpetual and indissoluble friendship—friendship which no change of fortune nor any alteration of external circumstances can be allowed to interrupt or weaken. After the commencement of this state there remain no longer any separate interests; the two individuals become united, and are therefore to enjoy the same felicity and suffer the same misfortunes—to have the same friends and the same enemies, the same success and the same disappointments. 1. It is remarked that “friendship amongst equals is the most lasting,” and perhaps there are few causes to which more unhappy marriages are to be ascribed than a disproportion between the original condition of the two persons. Difference of condition makes difference of education, and difference of education produces differences of habits, sentiments, and inclinations. 2. Strict friendship is “to have the same desires and the same aversions.” Whoever is to choose a friend is to consider first the resemblance or the dissimilitude of tempers. How necessary this caution is to be urged as preparatory to marriage the misery of those who neglect it sufficiently evinces. To enumerate all the varieties of disposition to which it may on this occasion be convenient to attend would be a tedious task; but it is at least proper to enforce one precept on this head—a precept which was never yet broken without fatal consequences: “Let the religion of the man and woman be the same.” 3. “Friends,” says the proverbial observation, “have everything in common.” This is likewise implied in the marriage covenant. Matrimony admits of no separate possessions, no incommunicable interests. 4. There is yet another precept equally relating to friendship and to marriage—a precept which in either case can never be too strongly inculcated or too scrupulously observed: “Contract friendship only with the good.” Virtue is the first quality to be considered in the choice of a friend, and yet more in a fixed and irrevocable choice. This maxim surely requires no comment nor any vindication; it is equally clear and certain, obvious to the superficial, and incontestable by the most accurate examiner. To dwell upon it is therefore superfluous; for though often neglected, it never was denied.

**II. By what means the end of marriage is to be attained.**—As it appears by examining the natural system of the universe that the greatest and smallest bodies are invested with the same properties and moved by the same laws, so a survey of the moral world will inform us that greater or less societies are to be made happy by the same means, and that, however relations may be varied or circumstances changed, virtue, and virtue alone, is the parent of felicity. If passion be suffered to prevail over right, and the duties of our state be broken through or neglected for the sake of gratifying our anger, our pride, or our revenge, the union of hearts will quickly be dissolved, and kindness will give way to resentment and aversion. 1. The duties by the practice of which a married life is to be made happy are the same with those of friendship, but exalted to higher perfection. Love must be more ardent, and confidence without

limits. It is therefore necessary on each part to deserve that confidence by the most unshaken fidelity, and to preserve their love unextinguished by continual acts of tenderness, not only to detest all real but seeming offences, and to avoid suspicion and guilt with almost equal solicitude. 2. But since the frailty of our nature is such that we cannot hope from each other an unvaried rectitude of conduct or an uninterrupted course of wisdom or virtue, as folly will sometimes intrude upon an unguarded hour, and temptations by frequent attacks will sometimes prevail, one of the chief acts of love is readily to forgive errors and overlook defects. Neglect is to be reclaimed by kindness, and perverseness softened by complaisance. 3. Marriage, however in general it resembles friendship, differs from it in this: that all its duties are not reciprocal. Friends are equal in every respect, but the relation of marriage produces authority on one side and exacts obedience on the other. But though obedience may be justly required, servility is not to be exacted; and though it may be lawful to exert authority, it must be remembered that to govern and to tyrannise are very different, and that oppression will naturally provoke rebellion. 4. The great rule both of authority and obedience is the law of God—a law which is not to be broken for the promotion of any ends or in compliance with any commands, and which indeed never can be violated without destroying that confidence which is the great source of mutual happiness: for how can that person be trusted whom no principle obliges to fidelity?—*S. Johnson, LL.D.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *A true pastor is never weary of instructing his people.*—He is always ready to communicate himself, because the treasure of his heart is always full of the truths of salvation. His known charity causes people to seek and apply themselves to him, and this search and concourse invite and solicit his charity. Kindle, O Lord, this double zeal, both in the pastors and in the sheep!—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 4. *A loose casuist generally wants either knowledge or sincerity.*—This conduct of the Pharisees is but too frequently imitated, who, being called upon to produce the primitive law published by Moses, "He shall cleave to his wife," suppress it, to insist upon a doctrine which was only tolerated, and to fix upon a dispensation of this law which had been extorted, as it were, by force. Men often substitute, in the room of the holy law of the gospel, a toleration of some things which corruption of manners has introduced contrary to the gospel itself.—*Ibid.*

Vers. 5-9. *The doctrine of Christ concerning marriage.*—1. Its binding character as instituted by God. 2. Its decay in the progress of history. 3. Its prepared restoration under the law. 4. Its transformation by the gospel.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

Ver. 5. *God does by no means authorise everything which He tolerates; and He frequently permits a less evil that a greater may be avoided.* It is absolutely necessary to distinguish in the Scripture that which God commands, that which He counsels, that which He expressly permits, and that which, out of His infinite patience, He only tolerates or suffers.—*P. Quesnel.*

Vers. 7, 8. *Marriage* may be regarded in three lights. 1. It is a *natural* contract, designed for "the propagation and perpetuation" of the human race. 2. It is a *civil* contract, entered into according to the laws of the state, for the preservation of peace and prosperity in the kingdom. 3. It is a *sacred* contract, raised by the new law

of Christ into something higher than the natural sphere—a rite through which grace is conferred upon two human beings for the fulfilment of the duties of the married state, an image of the union between Christ and His Church.

Ver. 7. *Husband and wife* complete and strengthen each other. A husband's love will not deaden but develop what is strong and individual in a wife's character; and a wife's love will give edge to her husband's individuality and heighten the worth of his work. This is not bondage, unless it be bondage for a child to be moulded by a mother's love, or for a friend to be influenced by the nobler character of his friend. That is the true freedom when what is best in me is free to grow because it is surrounded by the conditions of growth. And that is the freedom of marriage where two souls are joined in a life-union by love and reverence, and help each other to be their true selves, enhance each other's moral influence, and heighten each other's joys.—*D. M. Ross.*

Ver. 9. *Marriage in the time of Christ.*—If we bear in mind that great laxity existed with regard to marriage even amongst the Jews in the time of our Lord, we shall see that His purpose was to bring marriage back to its original foundation, and so “give

perpetual security to His followers for the sanctity of home.” There were two schools amongst the Jews, those of Hillel and Shammai; the former allowed divorce for slight reasons, the latter only for grave offences. Both, though in very different degrees, fell short of the doctrine of the permanency which, according to Divine appointment, belonged to the marriage bond. When the Pharisees twitted Christ with the Mosaic “command to give a writing of divorcement,” He reminded them that it was not a “a command,” but a matter of sufferance, because the standard of their fathers was so low; and that it was not so from the beginning, but that He came to restore the institution of marriage to its original condition, and to add to it new grace.

*The marriage bond.*—Not only our religious but our social and national well-being demands the permanency of the marriage bond. Without it, marriage degenerates into a form of selfish and sensual gratification; with it, it is a state of complete and unreserved mutual self-surrender. Without it, home rests upon the sands; with it, it is founded on a rock. If marriages and homes are to be ruled by mere selfishness, and not by pure love, we know from history that national greatness is too closely bound up with home life to continue when domestic happiness is gone.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—16.

(PARALLELS: MATT. XIX. 13-15; LUKE XVIII. 15-17.)

*Children welcomed to Christ.*—Infant baptism was assuredly in the mind, in the will, and in the intention of Christ at that moment. In fact, was it not baptism, only without the water? Where He stood visibly in all His grace and power, the emblem and the instrument were not needed. We now want the help and assurance of the external symbol. But if some say, “Is not the base too small for the superstructure? The record is so very simple here, and we only read of it but once,” I answer, Every incident in Christ's life was intended to be a germ of great thought, of deep principle, and of extensive duty. And if it were only *once* that Jesus blessed the little children, as often as the children were brought to Him so often He blessed them.



**I. The danger and sin of standing in the way of children coming to Christ.—**

1. I do not speak now of those who, upon a principle in their own minds, do not bring infants to holy baptism: they are acting conscientiously; and doubtless their sin of ignorance is pardoned, and their children may not be suffered by a loving Father to miss the grace which He had willed to give them. 2. There are persons who, believing the baptism of infants to be according to the mind of God, nevertheless, from idolence or thoughtlessness, neglect that holy rite. 3. Perhaps few persons are aware of the extent to which children, even very young children's minds, are capable of being affected, prejudiced, distorted, injured, by the conversation which they hear. You talk before a child lightly and falsely upon religious and moral subjects. You mean no harm. You do not remember a little child is present; and you do not recollect how that little child is listening to and drinking in all you say. But that child cannot balance or direct or dismiss a subject as you do. It has fallen with a fearful impression. It has left a stamp and an irreverence perhaps, a doubt perhaps, a wicked imagination perhaps, which will never, never be obliterated! 4. Some cast obstacles less offensively, but perhaps more dangerously. Whoever considers the subject must become aware how exceedingly uninviting, nay, how repulsive, religion is generally made to children. Where is that cheerfulness and that gladness which a child loves, and in which real religion always consists?

**II. The duty of bringing children to Christ.**—If you wish a child to be really religious, you must begin with the distinctive features of Christianity, and imbue it with the gospel. I will illustrate my meaning by three examples. You desire to lay in your child's mind the foundation of right conduct, and of a good, upright life. Tell him at once about Jesus. Tell him, "Jesus died for you, and therefore, though you are a very sinful child, God has forgiven you, and God loves you. For Jesus Christ's sake, you are His own dear child." Or take another instance. Your child has told a lie. What shall you do to him? Tell him, "Jesus is truth. Try to be true, that you may be like Jesus. Heaven is all truth, because heaven is all like Jesus. Go, and never be unlike Jesus again." Or your child has fallen into any sin. Do not be afraid to say to that child at once Jesus died to wash away that sin. Go and ask Him to do it. And He will do it. He will do it instantly. He will do it perfectly, if you ask Him.

**III. We ourselves must be like little children.**—If it were only that we might influence children, we should cultivate a childlike spirit; for none can do good, especially to the young, but those who are very simple in their thoughts and very lowly in their ways. But in what are we to become like a little child? 1. When those little children lay in Jesus' arms, His act came before any of their acts. It was anticipatory of what was to follow. They received what He gave them as a free gift of His. They could have no sense whatever that they deserved it. But freely as He bestowed the grace, so freely the little children took it. This is just the way to get to the kingdom. 2. A very little child never doubts where it has learned to love. It believes everything, and questions nothing. The credulity of the child is the faith of the Christian. My Saviour, my Lord, has said it. I will believe it, and ask no questions. 3. A very little child is necessarily led. It knows it cannot go alone. And we must be content all of us to be borne and carried every step. Those who get to heaven do not march in, they do not walk there: they are carried there.—*J. Vaughan, M.A.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13-16. *The Son of Man among the children of men.*—1. As the heavenly new and fresh related to the earthly new and fresh. 2. As the humble One to the artless. 3. As the Prince of faith to the confiding. 4. As the great Warrior to the strivers. 5. As the great Hope to the hoping. 6. As the Blessed with the happy.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

*Children are specially susceptible of spiritual influences.*—In their case there is still—1. Confidence instead of scepticism. 2. Self-surrender instead of distrust. 3. Truth instead of hypocrisy. 4. Modesty and humility instead of pride.—*Lisco.*

Vers. 13, 14. *Infant baptism.*—We have been accustomed to allege these words in behalf of the Catholic practice of infant baptism; and rightly, for they have been always so understood by the Church,—and the voice of the Church Universal is that of the Lord. “Baptise also your infants,” says an ancient writing, speaking the sense of the Greek Church, “and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of God. For He saith, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.’” And in the Latin Church of old times (as in our own), in the Baptismal Service for Infants, they read this history out of one of the three Gospels, as their Lord’s sanction of their act of charity.—*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*

Ver. 14. *The kingdom of heaven,* or sovereignty of the Messiah, is constituted of such as the children presented to Christ. He does not say, observe, that this kingdom consists of children, but of such as children. It is therefore some similarity to that class of persons which indicates membership of the community of the faithful. In what, then, does that similarity lie? It cannot refer to age, for it is not true that infants alone are members of the Church; nor can it refer specially

to the physical or external characteristics of childhood; but it refers to the following peculiarities. 1. The only prominent circumstance about an infant’s history is its birth. Nothing else has happened to it. No other event relating to it deserves notice. The grand, the sole feature to be noted is, that it was born. Of suchlike persons is the kingdom of God. What designates and marks out the subjects of this kingdom is a new birth, a regeneration. A new heart, a new spirit, a new nature, a new man—such are the expressions employed to represent their character. 2. Infants are helpless; and of suchlike persons is the kingdom of heaven, because all who enter therein must feel their inability to do anything of themselves. Their sufficiency must be of God. They must, “as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby.” 3. Infants are humble, unconscious of all pride and self-righteousness; and of suchlike persons is the kingdom of heaven, because the followers of Jesus must, like their Master, be humble and lowly of heart. 4. Infants are teachable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; and of suchlike persons is the kingdom of heaven, because all its subjects are brought to submit every high thought and lofty imagination to the obedience of Christ. 5. Infants are without moral obligation, and therefore untainted by the guilt of actual sin, unworldly and uncarnal; and of such is the kingdom of heaven, inasmuch as those who enter therein have been crucified to all sinful lusts—have put off the old man, which is corrupt—been renewed in the spirit of their minds—and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. 6. Infants are void of offence towards man; and of suchlike is the kingdom of heaven, because those who enter therein are “in malice children,” and have “laid aside guile,

and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings," striving to be harmless as little children.—*A. Nisbet.*

Ver. 15. *To receive the kingdom as a little child* implies that we receive it—1. Humbly, as the provision of Sovereignty. 2. Trustfully, as the device of Fatherly Wisdom. 3. Gratefully, as the gift of Saving Love.—*J. E. Henry.*

*Christian childhood* consists in having no more pride, impurity, resentment, craft, ambition, covetousness, and knowledge of evil than children. It is this which renders us conformable, gives us admission, and unites us to Jesus Christ in His kingdom. What is here said is not by way of counsel, but it shews the absolute necessity of being such, at least in some degree, in order to be saved.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 16. *Christ blessing infants.*—What parent of us would not wish, if he might, that our Saviour should lay His hand upon his child and bless it? And if His visible touch was such a source of comfort and of hope, how not and much more when He, the risen, the ascended Saviour, who from the right hand of God sheds forth His

gifts abundantly upon His Church, not lays only His hands upon them, but makes them members of Himself, "members of His body, of His flesh, of His bones," members of "His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all." We know still less of the ineffable greatness of that we seek for than did these poor parents who sought for His bodily touch and His prayers; and the wish of those who seek for baptism for the bodily health of their children is not so far below their belief whose belief is most enlightened, as is theirs below the inexpressible reality; and so, for the comfort of us all, our Saviour herein shewed that He regarded not our merits, but His mercies—not our ignorance, but His own omniscience—not our faint wish for a blessing we know not what, but our trust in Him, our wish to have a blessing from Him, the inexhaustible Fountain of all blessedness; and grants not according to the poverty of our desires, but according to the overflowing riches of His goodness, takes our infants even now invisibly up in His everlasting arms, and returns them to us—blessed.—*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17—22.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xix. 16-22; LUKE xviii. 18-23.)

*The rich young ruler.*—I. *The hopeful inquiry.* 1. Who is he? Vaguely introduced as "one" Luke says "a certain ruler," Matthew calls him "the young man"—all agree in saying that he was rich: combining these points, we get his usual title—"the rich young ruler." 2. How does he act? Mark pictures the scene. His eagerness expressed by his running; fearless disregard of opinion of others, by his public appeal to Christ (no Nicodemus); his respect for One without rank or office, by his kneeling. 3. What does he say? "Good Master, what," etc. How to obtain eternal life, that he would know. No quibble here, no playing on the surface of things. Life's solemn responsibility has sobered him. Much here to make us hopeful.

II. *The startling reply.*—Few things more remarkable than the way Jesus dealt with men. Each was to Him an open book. He replies to the thought more than to the word. 1. "Why callest thou Me good?" This was intended to make him see how shallow was his conception of goodness. The light, careless, possibly patronising use of this word, a word dropped thoughtlessly, betrayed him. Our very approach to Christ tests us, and either convicts us of lack of spiritual insight and desire, or it will call out all that is deepest and truest.



2. Christ meets him on his own ground, refers him to the six commandments which regulate man's conduct towards his fellows. Thou knowest them—keep them. "All these have I observed." Could you have stood up before the pitiful but piercing gaze of Jesus and said so much? Truly he knew not the deep spiritual reach of the commandments; yet "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him." O heart of infinite love! 3. There was a fatal flaw, and Christ applied a stern test to lay it bare: "Go, sell"—then, "Come, follow Me." All is tested by devotion to Christ's own person. Here is the very essence of Christianity. Not correct belief, not blameless living, not human goodness—though all this is helpful and lovable; but the self given up, fully surrendered. All else parted with, and then following Jesus.

III. *The disappointing refusal.*—1. "He went away." To throw away position, prospects, wealth, it seemed a harsh demand. For there was a flaw within. Something, perhaps a great deal, he was willing to do to obtain eternal life, but to fling this life away was too great a price. So you see his original question meant, "What shall I do, and still retain my position?" 2. Yet he went away "sorrowful," for that we will be glad: not scornful, or indignant, or with a light flippancy. He carried the arrow within. Did he ever return? Who shall say? But he missed his golden opportunity; he could not rise to the rank of hero.—*T. Puddicombe.*

*The great refusal.*—The young man in this narrative was worth looking at. To begin with, he was young; and youth is always interesting. Then he was rich, "very rich," and "a ruler" besides. Better still, he was of upright character, claiming a due respect for the Divine law. He was amiable also, for when the Lord looked upon him He loved him. But the best of all was his earnestness. A young man in earnest, and in earnest with respect to spiritual things! When Cæsar saw Brutus for the first time and heard him pleading in the Forum, he said, "Yon youth is destined to make his mark, because he intends strongly." The youth who here prostrated himself before Jesus intended strongly. But, alas! there were grave difficulties in the way. The heavenward path is ever steep and rugged. Three serious mistakes he made, any one of which would have nullified his pursuit of spiritual things.

I. *With respect to Christ.*—At this point he was an Arian. He addressed Jesus as "Good Rabbi," and would probably have been willing to pronounce Him the most excellent of men. But Jesus would have none of it. "Why callest thou Me good?" said He; "there is none good but One, that is, God." The alternative, put in syllogistic form, was like this:—

God alone is good:  
Thou dost not believe Me to be God;  
*Ergo*, Call Me not good.

Or—

God alone is good:  
Thou callest Me good;  
*Ergo*, Go farther and pronounce Me God.

In any case, as merely a "Good Rabbi," He could not receive it. The compliments of those who esteem Him anything else or lower than He claimed to be are, in the nature of the case, an affront to Him. All through His ministry He insisted that He was the long-looked-for Christ, and as such the very Son of God. He arrogated to Himself all the Divine attributes and distinctly made Himself equal with God. For this He suffered death. He was either what He claimed to be or He was an impostor. "Good Rabbi" He certainly was not. There is no middle ground. Was Voltaire right when he cried, "Ecrasez l'infame!" or Peter when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God"?

**II. With reference to himself.**—At this point he was a Pelagian. He had no comprehension of his own moral character. In one of Hogarth's cartoons a demented prisoner sits in the straw, chained like a beast to his dungeon wall; but he smiles and sings as if he were the happiest of mortals. The straw is his throne, his jailors are his courtiers; he deems himself the envy of crowned kings. Not greater is his self-deception than that of the self-righteous man who deems himself worthy to appear in judgment before God.

**III. With respect to salvation.**—At this point he was a Legalist. "What shall I do," said he, "that I may inherit eternal life?" There was indeed nothing for him to do. Had he but known it, life is a gracious gift. If we are ever saved, it will not be on account of our doing, but by God's giving. He is not a merchant that He should sell his precious wares; He is a king and gives right royally. But while salvation is free it is conditioned. God who gives it has been pleased—as was His obvious right—to affix a condition upon its bestowal, to wit, *He that believeth shall live*. To believe is to accept. Faith is the hand stretched out to grasp God's grace. Salvation is free—free as air, as water, as the manna which lay like hoar-frost on the ground. But if the Israelites had not gathered up the manna they would have died of hunger. And though a man stood on the bank of the Amazon, were he to refuse to drink he would perish of thirst. There is an atmosphere fifty miles deep around this earth of ours, but a man who will not breathe must strangle. So I say salvation is free; but it saves only the man who reaches forth and takes it. The word of the Master comes to you as to this young man, "Go, sell all that thou hast: put away everything—gold, pleasure, unholy ambition, everything that separates between thee and holiness—and come and follow Me."—*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*

Ver. 18. *The goodness of God.*—**I. God is a good Being.**—1. Creation is evidently an effect of goodness, and throughout displays the goodness of God. (1) Life is felt by all sentient creatures to be a blessing; they seek to preserve it. (2) No creature is made without a capacity for enjoyment and a susceptibility of pleasure of some kind. (3) The arrangement and order of the universe and its various parts, the curious organisation of creatures, the manner in which one thing is adapted to another, and the principle of utility which pervades the whole, exhibit abundant proof of the goodness of the Maker of all things. 2. Divine providence furnishes further proof that God is good. (1) God hath made ample provision for the wants of all His creatures, and furnished them with abundant means of enjoyment. (2) Provision is not only made for the preservation and comfort of individuals, of all who at present exist, but also for perpetuating the various orders of creatures by successive generations; and the means necessary to these ends are sources of pleasure. (3) The kindness of Divine providence is everywhere manifested. He openeth His hand and supplieth the wants of all living. He crowneth the year with His goodness. 3. The moral system which God hath established exhibits clear proofs that He is a good Being. (1) Such a system is established in the moral world, that man must be the artificer of his own happiness, he must erect the superstructure of his own intellectual and moral attainments. (2) Such a connexion is established between causes and effects in the moral system, that no man can be vicious with impunity, nor virtuous without receiving a reward. Every evil passion is in some degree a tormenter. Virtue is productive of peace of mind and intellectual pleasure, and is conducive to health, cheerfulness, reputation, and even worldly comfort and advantage. The Being who hath thus arranged causes and effects must be good. (3) The moral system is so constituted that true self-love will lead us to do good to our fellow-creatures.

The more good a man does, the more happiness he gains. This order of things could arise from nothing but goodness. (4) The laws established in the moral system have a constant tendency to intellectual and moral improvement. To judge properly of this, we should compare the present state of knowledge and improvement, both as to its degree and extent, with what it was in former times. A system which ever tends to greater perfection must have originated with a Being who is perfectly good. 4. Divine revelation is a testimony of the goodness of God. (1) In the Scriptures the goodness of God is proclaimed. It is declared that He is good, good unto all, and that His goodness abideth continually. (2) Divine revelation not only declares that God is good, it exhibits the most astonishing proofs of His goodness. It makes known the greatness of His love, and opens the riches of His grace to the children of men. It contains a provision for all our moral and spiritual wants. 5. The goodness of God is so evident from His works, and so plainly declared in His Word, as to compel universal assent among all who profess faith in Him. It may be objected that there is much evil in the world, and asked how its existence is to be reconciled with the belief that all things were made and are governed by a Being who is perfectly good. (1) Evil is relative, and may be made subservient to good; there is no such thing as absolute evil: consequently its existence is not incompatible with the absolute goodness of God. (2) Evil is partial and temporary; good or enjoyment everywhere preponderates, and will be eternal; evil is merely an infraction of the established order of things, throughout which goodness appears. (3) We see evil in many instances made subservient to and productive of good: hence it is reasonable to conclude all evil will be made to issue in good. (4) Constituted as the present world is, and formed as man is, to be instructed by experience, it does not appear that all evil could be excluded in the present state. (5) It cannot be shewn that more evil is permitted than is necessary to produce the greatest ultimate good; and unless this could be shewn, its existence cannot be proved inconsistent with Divine goodness.

**II. Under what views God only is good.**—1. The goodness of God is underived, uncaused, unoriginated. Goodness is His essential and eternal nature. This cannot be said of any other being. The goodness of all others is originated and derived. 2. God alone is the primary Source of all that is good in the universe. It is either the work of His hand or a communication from His fulness. 3. The goodness of God is pure and absolute. There is nothing in God but what is good, nor that can operate but for good. His goodness is without the least alloy. It is not diminished by ignorance, nor by weakness, nor by the slightest possible limitation of powers; nor is it capable of being bounded in its operations by any power in the universe: for it is the pure goodness of an infinitely wise and almighty Being, who is the supreme, universal, and eternal Sovereign. 4. The goodness of God is most perfect. It is all that goodness can be. It comprehends all His attributes and perfections: they are all modifications of goodness, which is His general excellence; and only differently characterised according to its various manifestations. 5. God being only and perfectly good, His goodness must be infinite. It can have no bound nor limit. It must extend to all creatures, and fill the universe; for it is the supreme excellence, infinite nature, and fulness of Him who filleth heaven and earth, whom heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain.

**Lessons.**—1. If God be infinitely good, how comprehensive must be His designs and plans of goodness respecting His creatures! 2. If God be infinitely good, He must necessarily have made all men for happiness; it is impossible He should give existence to a single individual without intending his happiness; or that He should cause him to exist, if He knew his existence, on the



whole, would not be to him a blessing. 3. If God be good, He cannot require impossibilities of His creatures; He cannot call them to perform what is above their strength; He cannot require they should be more perfect than He hath formed them capable of being; He will not severely mark their frailties and imperfections; He will not reject the well meant endeavours of His feeble and erring offspring to please Him, though mixed with ignorance and imperfection; because to do these things would be contrary to goodness. 4. If God be purely good, He must be naturally merciful, ready to forgive, and to dispense salvation and eternal life of His free favour. 5. If God be absolutely good, He must always allot to His creatures what He sees to be wisest and best for them; nor can He suffer anything painful to befall them, but what is necessary for their benefit. 6. If God be infinitely good, He cannot be partial: He cannot have limited His love, and His gracious and merciful provision of salvation and eternal life, to a part of the great family He hath created; for such partiality would be inconsistent with unbounded goodness. 7. If God be perfectly good, He cannot be the subject of revenge, for revenge is inconsistent with perfect goodness. 8. The goodness of God should lead sinners to repentance. 9. The infinite goodness of God establishes the firmest ground of confidence in Him. 10. The infinite goodness of God is a sufficient reason why we should love Him with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. 11. As God alone is absolutely good, He alone is the proper object of Divine worship and of the highest adoration. 12. As goodness is the supreme excellence, it is most worthy of imitation; and it is our highest interest, so far as we are capable, to imitate the goodness of God. 13. Our hopes, founded upon the infinite goodness of God, cannot be raised too high respecting our final portion and the final portion of our fellow-creatures. What may we not expect from such a God?—*J. Smith.*

Ver. 22. *Worldly-mindedness.*—This young man was not the slave or lover of vice, but he was not ready to become the ardent and devoted lover of virtue. It is so with many of us. We are not ready to yield ourselves the slaves of sin, but neither are we ready to give ourselves to the pursuit of great excellence. And we compound the matter by observing the forms of religion, but giving the heart and every warm and devoted feeling to the world. In a word, very many who would revolt at the idea of vice are willing to be worldly-minded. A determination of this kind is full of treason against the nature which God has given us and against His will. He wills our moral exaltation and perfection, our transformation into His image. The worldly-minded choose to retain their likeness to that which is of the earth, and thus as effectually as the vicious, though in another way, cross and defeat the purposes of God. The love of the world is exclusive and engrossing. If it takes possession of the heart, the saying of the apostle is infallibly verified: the love of the Father cannot exist or thrive there; it is extruded or overlaid. The worldly-minded are bent upon some project or pursuit or pleasure which absorbs and fills the mind and for the time satisfies the desires. The soul does not crave anything more or better; and if it be occasionally sad and discontented, the recurrence of its customary resources and objects of satisfaction restores its tranquillity. It is not necessary in order to constitute a worldly mind that it derives *all* its happiness from the sources of this world; it is sufficient that it relies on them principally and most firmly. He is a bad man whose bad deeds outnumber his good ones; he is a covetous man whose mean and narrow actions are more than his generous and just ones; he is an ill-tempered man whose prevalent humour is pettish or surly; he is a sensual man who thinks more of the indulgence of appetite than of the culture of the mind and heart;

and he too is a worldly man who loves the world better and more than those things that are better than and above the world, whose thoughts dwell more upon it, whose affections fasten more upon it, than upon those things which in his heart he still knows to be infinitely more worth loving.

**I. In what way then, if it is so dangerous, does it obtain its bad supremacy?**—The encroachments of a worldly mind are gradual; its growth is slow, but sure and regular; its dominion is established through plausible appearances and pretences. 1. A devotion to business, the pursuit of one profession by which a livelihood is to be secured or a reputation to be gained, is a broad avenue for the entrance of worldly-mindedness. It is strictly true, though it may sound paradoxical, that the most faithful discharge of the duties of our callings is attended with peculiar danger as it respects the religious affections and a right state of the soul. For it is apt to beget in time a total neglect of and indifference to any considerations but such as relate to worldly prosperity and promotion. Let me not be misunderstood. We are doubtless to love the world, its duties and callings; but it is equally plain that we are not to love them too much or too long. It is our particular business to ascertain where the virtue of loving rightly ends and the vice of loving too well begins. It can form no apology for worldliness that we were occupied industriously with the regular business of our station. For the soul, though made for earth, was made for heaven too; and those duties are equally demanded of it which fit it for the one as for the other. He does but half his work who lives but for this world, though he lives well and honourably for it. 2. Again, worldly-mindedness comes upon us through the avenue of social feelings and enjoyments. In this case too, as in the one already mentioned, we are led to it by the virtues. It is a virtue of high order to love those by whom we are surrounded, and with whom we are obliged to come in contact. It is a virtue to do them favours, and to receive in a good spirit favour from them. But how easily do these virtues run into an excess that is rightly denominated a vice! How short and direct the transition from a social to a worldly temper. The duty of mingling to a reasonable and proper degree with our fellow-men becomes in many instances so agreeable as to lead to the neglect of other and more important duties. The love of society grows into a passion. The mind that once gave itself to it timidly and reservedly, through fear of forgetting higher concerns, comes at last to be wholly dependent on it for its most valued and exciting pleasures. The sources of moral and intellectual pleasure have at length been so long forsaken that they cease to yield anything that the mind relishes. It listens perhaps with a faint and weary attention to the truths which once in seven days it thinks it right and decent to respect and believe, but all its ardour and enthusiasm and strong interest are for other scenes and other thoughts. The limit up to which all these things are either virtuous or at least innocent is soon and unconsciously passed. The world has intruded upon the soul and the love of God has departed almost before it has been perceived that any important change was going on. In this way has the mind of many a one grown to be so wedded to the enjoyments of society as absolutely to reject and despise any other source of occupation and pleasure, and at length indeed to be incapable of relishing any other. 3. Worldliness comes again through education. Education, which should be sacred to those interests of the human soul which are ultimately of the highest value, is but too often the direct and mischievous agent in debasing the desires and corrupting the mind. It is often occupied about those things which are wholly secondary or frivolous, or at least the highest and best and most useful topics of instruction are not touched upon or enforced. Moral and religious education on the part of parents is far too little attended to,—I mean the

education which lies in the moral habits, pure principles, timely counsels, affectionate warnings, good examples, religious lives, of father and mother. Of this close domestic education there is too little; but of it there cannot be too much. But not only is this too much neglected, an opposite education in too many instances takes its place—one of the chief objects of which would seem not to be the culture of a moral and intellectual being, but how best to prepare for a striking entrance upon the world, how best to secure its favours and rewards. The standard of action proposed is not what is right, what is moral, what becoming our nature and conformable to the demands of religion; but what will the world think, what will it say, how will it regard you, what will best enable you to make your way in it? And the young are made to learn, to study, to think, to act, with reference not primarily to be useful and good, but to the sovereign opinion of the world. What wonder then if the world, for which youth has been thus made the season of training and preparation, should in the end engage that respect and reverence which are due to a higher authority?

II. If in these and similar ways a worldly mind is created and takes possession of us, we learn whence to expect its approach and where to place our guard.—If we consider it rightly, we shall feel that it is a mind most hostile to religion and most dangerous to ourselves, and calling for our strong and untiring efforts to change and to conquer. In order to do this we have simply to remember the quarters whence it comes, and to feel the importance of guarding against its approach. This is the only just and meritorious way of resisting it. We have no right to take ourselves out of that world in which we have been placed and our station has been appointed. God alone may take off the burden of our trial and separate us from this scene of duty and temptation. In the meantime we must live on as we are, and resist as we may, and overcome if we can. We must mingle in the world's crowd, we must expose ourselves to its temptations, we must venture within the magic circle of its attractions; but we must shew by our conduct that we are above it, superior to its enchantments. We must coolly compare its rewards and pleasures with those which religion offers, and prefer the latter from real conviction of their higher value.

III. If we glance at the unhappy effect which the love of the world has upon those who are its slaves, we shall deeply feel the wisdom and prudence, as well as the duty, of resisting its power. When a worldly disposition has taken *entire* possession of the soul, so that the world and its scenes of pleasure or occupation are all for which life is valued, I need not say that it is wholly incompatible with the existence of religion in the soul that the love of the Father cannot dwell there. But where the love of the world has not proceeded to this extreme, its effects are still deplorable and sad. It disorders the mind—unsettles it—incapacitates it for reflexion—alienates it from quiet and sober pleasures—creates a restless and uneasy longing for excitements which ordinary life, and still more religion, fails to afford. In the same way that the intemperate man has created by indulgence an appetite which continued indulgence can alone allay and satisfy, the lover of pleasure has nourished desires and cultivated tastes whose wants a life of idleness and pleasure can alone meet. With others, again, the love of the world is a mixed emotion. God and the world rule by turns. The empire of the mind is a contested region. The heart is divided. It would fain love God and lift its affections to Him, and yet it cannot bring itself to renounce so much of the world as to enable it to do so. Worldliness is in this way the successful and potent enemy of religion. It does not succeed in banishing it wholly from the soul; but it does succeed in diminishing and alloying its comforts. It



does not take the mind wholly from God and the contemplation of its great destiny; but it takes it away so much and so often that it returns to them unwillingly and derives from them little satisfaction. It is in Christians of this frame that worldly-mindedness produces the most mental sorrow and disquiet. It poisons all their sources of religious pleasure, and substitutes none in their place. In the world they are without peace, for their consciences upbraid them. In religion they are restless, for their thoughts still wander to the world. If it were only for these sad effects upon our minds and hearts, which would otherwise find their joy in the best and holiest things, we see reason enough to detest the disposition of which we speak, as one mischievously productive of the acutest pains and most desponding sensations of which the human heart is susceptible.

IV. I have urged the importance of resisting the influence of the world, its occupations and pleasures; **but I do not say that it is an easy duty.** It is a hard one. To those who live and move in the better walks of life, into whose lap fortune has poured her full horn, who enjoy the honours and praise of the world, there is a brilliant lustre spread over the face of society, a joy and excitement in its dazzling intercourse, a deep interest in its scenes of pleasure, that occupy and absorb the whole heart, that tie it down to earth by a bond strong as death, but invisible and unfelt. It is not easy to break this bond, to conquer the strong love which has been thus created. It is not easy thus to take the heart away from such scenes and pleasures, to teach it to find its happiness in scenes and pleasures the very opposite. It is not easy for one all whose thoughts have been of the earth to fix them on the things that are above. This change involves as entire a revolution of character and feeling as when the slave of notorious sin is converted and finds in virtue the peace and joy he once found only in vice. It demands, therefore, great effort on the part of those who are interested in the work of their own conversion in order thoroughly to accomplish it. They who linger in the haunts of pleasure, in the resolve that by-and-by, at whatever time they shall desire, they will break from the world and shut it wholly out of their hearts, but in the meantime they will love it as they have ever done, are precisely those who will always love it, and the more passionately and exclusively as the mind becomes weakened by age.—*W. Ware.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 17. "*Good Master.*"—There is more in this epithet "good," as here applied, than at first sight appears. It betrays his self-righteous spirit. He is doing more than paying a compliment to the Saviour here. He is indirectly paying a compliment to *himself*—to his own goodness, or at any rate to human goodness, that idol which he worshipped with his whole soul. He looks up to Him as possessed of this goodness, in a far higher measure than himself indeed, but still of the same kind of goodness. He regards and reveres Him, much in the same

fashion as some in our day, as a good man, as *the* good man, the perfect man, the ideal man, the personification of virtue, the incarnation of moral excellence, the pattern and perfection of all goodness, who had attained to this goodness in the way he himself had attained to his. He was thus conceiving of the Saviour as one very much like himself; he was transferring his own views and feelings to Him. "*Good Master, what good thing shall I do?*" —*A. L. R. Foote.*

*An excellent question.*—How advantageous is it frequently to ask at the

feet of Christ what we must do in order to our salvation! It is an excellent practice, provided we perform it as we ought. He alone is capable of shewing us the way to heaven, being Himself the way; He alone is incapable of deceiving us, since He is the truth; and He alone is worthy to conduct us to eternal life, being Himself that very life.—*P. Quesnel*.

Ver. 18. *A sound foundation for religious belief*.—This question appears to spring out of a general method of dealing with men in quest of salvation. Christ was in no haste to get men to make correct religious affirmations, but rather took pains to lay sound moral foundations of religious belief. To persons seeking eternal life He did not say, "Call Me good, call Me Christ, call Me God, call Me Saviour"—all things which may be truly affirmed, and which it is most desirable all should affirm eventually—but, Reflect what goodness is, what it is to be a Christ, what God is, commands, and loves, what salvation implies, what true life consists in. The attainment of true conceptions on these subjects is the business of discipleship.—*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*

*The goodness of God*.—The epithet *ἀγαθός*, "good," applied by the young man to Jesus, signifies generous, large-hearted. In speaking of God as the only good, then, our Lord meant to represent the Divine Being as generous more than just—as benignant, gracious. And if we would know how benignant, we must look to His own life on earth—see Him associating with publicans and sinners, see Him dying on the Cross.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 19. *Christ's use of the Decalogue*.—1. Our Lord enumerates the commandments not in the order in which they occur in the Old Testament, but as they occur to His memory. 2. If Mark's report be accurate, He quotes them freely, using His own words instead of those of Moses, and caring for the sense rather than the letter,

so freely that it is still matter of dispute which of the commandments He referred to in *defraud not*. The better opinion seems to be that it was the tenth commandment, beginning with "Thou shalt not covet"; for to covet anything which is our neighbour's *is*, so far as we are able, to defraud or deprive him of it. If we assume this to be the reference, every commandment, from five to ten, of the second table is quoted in this verse.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

*The commandments sufficient*.—The commandments of God afford us sufficient instruction: it is often nothing but curiosity which desires other lights. The law of God makes known His will; and it is by conforming ourselves thereto that we partake of His goodness and holiness. Let Thy law, O my God, be continually the rule of my behaviour and actions!—*P. Quesnel*.

Ver. 20. *Self-deception as to one's character*.—To us His answer seems proud and presumptuous, and yet how frequently are like words used by us! And are not similar thoughts to be found in our hearts? How we boast of our irreproachable character! Because we do not indulge in gross sins, at which even the world takes offence, we think ourselves righteous; but how far are we from being so when we view the matter aright! There is nothing about which we so greatly deceive ourselves as our own condition. The same eye which can plainly see the smallest mote in a brother's eye cannot perceive the beam in its own.—*E. Lehmann*.

Ver. 21. *Christ's look of love*.—The Son of God, upon the assumption of human nature, had His soul touched with all our passions, yet so as to be sinless and innocent emotions of His Diviner mind; and, as we cannot but do, unless we be very well versed in the art of dissimulation, He also made discoveries of them in His very looks and eyes. These are the windows of the heart, through which it sees and is itself seen, and shews all its pleasures and discontents to others: hence mutual

sight proves such entertainment to friends and breeds no less regret to foes. Our Blessed Lord, who was all made of compassion and love, being freed from all those rugged, boisterous distempers which we, whilst we seek to trouble others with, labour under ourselves, feeling the worst effects of our heats and animosities within our own breasts—He, I say, had all the lines of goodness drawn in His heavenly face, and above all His eyes sparkling with seraphic love, and darting forth rays of it to warm and fire the hearts of all that either beheld Him or He beheld. Fortunate man whom He who is now for ever to be thy Lord hath cast and fixed His gracious eye upon, to mark thee for His friendship and the choicest dignations of His love!—*A. Littleton, D.D.*

*Christ loves the virtuous.*—There are those whose lives have been pure, who have been generous and cherished no ill-will to others, who have been truthful, and who have been pitiful and considerate to the weak and the aged, those whose youthful brows are bound with a crown of the natural virtues. Now this passage says to all of that sort that Jesus Christ when He looks upon you loves you; He loves you with a special love, and desires you for His kingdom, for you are nearer to Him, liker to Him, than others are. Though possessing only what we may call the natural virtues and moral excellences, you are loved in His sight before you go further, and are not strictly what are called His disciples. When you live a pure life and are dutiful, when you shun uncleanness and vice, when you are truthful and upright, then the Lord Jesus, looking upon you, loves you.—*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*

*A hard requirement.*—More of us than we are willing to believe are kept from entire surrender to Jesus Christ by money and worldly possessions; and many professing Christians are kept shrivelled and weak and joyless because they love their wealth more than their Lord, and would think it madness to do as this man was bidden to do. When

ballast is thrown out, the balloon shoots up. A general unlading of the “thick clay” which weighs down the Christian life of England and of America would let thousands soar to heights which they will never reach as long as they love money and what it buys as much as they do.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*“Follow Me.”*—The life of Jesus Christ always illustrated the truth which He taught and the principles of His kingdom. He did not lay on the young man a burden which He Himself did not bear. It was His own life that He recommended him to follow. Christ’s poverty and the fact that He possessed nothing were not probably in order to shew sympathy with the poor, at least not specially, but in order to shew the nature of His kingdom, which is just men and God together—men with nothing, men destitute of all but themselves, possessing nothing—casting themselves just as men upon God.—*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*

Ver. 22. *“Sad.”*—Observe that the word is “sad,” not “angry.” The young man went away grieved, not shocked nor indignant. These distinctions are of some value, as shewing that the young man had no complaint against the reasonableness or fitness of Christ’s demand. He approved and admired more than he felt able to adopt and to obey. And because he was an honest man he did not fling epithets at the Teacher or the truth which had so unexpectedly disturbed him. He paid respect to both, and practically judged himself in fault in the grief and sadness with which he went away.—*C. A. Berry.*

*Sorrow apart from Christ.*—There are thousands who do not follow Christ who are sorrowful because of it. They would give much that they were His followers. They can conceive how joyful it would be to be His. Their aimless, broken life would be reunited and made one if dedicated to Him. They have powers and influence—they feel them. They would be glad if they could devote the powers and influence



they have to Him. It would, they are sure, fill and satisfy their empty, unsatisfied hearts to be His followers. They are of all men the most miserable. To the natural sorrows of life they add this sorrow, that they cannot give them-

selves the true comfort. But why not? Why not? Why go away? Why add another sorrow to the sorrows that already accumulate upon them?—*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 23—27.

(PARALLELS: MATT. XIX. 23-26; LUKE XVIII. 24-27.)

*Mundane trust a barrier.*—Men are ever astonished when taken out of their own little grooves. Enlarge a man's world and wonderment is the result. Jesus never wondered at His own sayings: it is impossible that He should have so done; and when, as here, He uses the word "impossible," He simply accommodates Himself to the finite capacity of His auditory. There is no such word as "impossible" in heaven's vocabulary. The interpretation often given to this passage is too limited in its application; because—

I. Sometimes it is regarded as a reflexion by Jesus Christ upon worldly wealth.—The rich, the poor, the high, the low, the old, the young, were all alike to Him. He looked not to condition, but to character. Jesus is not here talking against wealth, but against trust in riches, a thing altogether different.

II. Jesus is often regarded as referring here only to very rich men.—This is one reason why all men pass the text on to their more wealthy neighbours, as being more applicable to them than to themselves. They forget that wealth is relative—forget that it is as possible to be purse-proud of five pounds as of fifty, and of fifty as of fifty thousand. Trustfulness in riches is a question of disposition and not of length of purse.

III. Jesus Christ is sometimes thought to be referring here only to the realm of the objective.—No doubt the text was suggested to the mind of our Lord by His conversation with the rich young man, the weak point in whose character was love of money. But we should be careful not to mistake parts for wholes—careful lest we conclude that the sayings of Jesus contain no more than what lies upon their surface. So that between the lines we may thus read: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, How hardly shall they that have learning, or physical strength, or intellectual power, or are socially high, or outwardly circumspect, enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for those who place their chief trust in these things to enter into the kingdom of God."—*J. S. Swan.*

OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 23-25. *Money.*—The subject of "money" is largely dealt with in the Bible—as much so in the New Testament as in the Old; and no unprejudiced mind will easily escape from the following conclusions about it: 1. That all moneys belong to God, as their Creator and Proprietor (Hag. ii. 8; Ps. l. 10; 1 Cor. x. 26, 28). 2. That He has consequently the

right to every penny we may think our own, and considers Himself *robbed* if we do not honour Him with our substance (Mal. iii. 8). 3. That we are in danger of putting money in God's place, and thereby becoming idolatrous (Exod. xxxii. 31). We are all prone to the same sin. 4. That, as a counter-active, God commands us to give it away to Him; or, what is equivalent,

to good and charitable objects. Thus the Jews were from the very beginning habituated to pay tithes; and Christians are under similar orders to give liberally of their means for the support and extension of the gospel (2 Cor. viii. 7, ix. 7). 5. That covetousness is a great evil, and leads to many others (1 Tim. vi. 10; Prov. xi. 28). 6. That to be rich is to be in great spiritual difficulties. The young man became *sad* when Christ bade him sell off and give to the poor. 7. That, in this view of it, it is surely better to be poor. 8. That under the Christian dispensation the amount to be given is left to conscience. It is a duty, however, that those to whom God has given most should give Him most. 9. That to give liberally to God entails no loss—not even loss in kind. Given from proper motives, many a subscription of one pound sterling has filled a man's barns or brought him a hundred per cent. It does not follow that you have really saved your money though you have withheld it (2 Cor. ix. 6; Prov. xi. 24). 10. That the miser may live and die in poverty. Judas hanged himself. Many a rich but illiberal man has died a pauper; and many a poor but liberal man has lived to be opulent and a blessing. I admired the reply that I once got from a liberal lady to a remark that she was too generous with her means. "No, no," she said; "I am generous only to myself. I wish to keep my money; therefore I clip its wings, lest it fly away; for you know it is written, 'Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.'" 11. That to be rich in grace is far better than to be rich in gold. Devils shall knock in vain at heaven's gate, but Lazarus enters. 12. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the only one to whom money can be safely entrusted. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive riches."—*John Macfarlane, LL.D.*

Ver. 23. *Riches a hindrance.*—Christ plainly says—because the world needed

to be plainly told—that they who *have* riches (literally, "things they can make use of") with difficulty enter into the kingdom of God. He says not a syllable about "excess" of riches. He says nothing about "the life to come." There is nothing said about its being *impossible* for the man with riches to enter, but there is the definite statement that those who have affairs, businesses, and the results which come from such, shall find it hard to enter. This applies quite as much to the poor as to the well-to-do, and it is concerned with the life that now is. "The kingdom of God" means those over whom God reigns with undivided rule, where His laws are His subjects' law, His will their will, His ways their ways. With all of us—whatever our riches may be, whether the weekly wage which just provides the things honest, or the wealth of some merchant prince—it is "with difficulty" that we keep ourselves from being "of the world"; it is "hardly" that we enter into the kingdom of God; it is with difficulty that we subserve its advance.—*J. W. Owen.*

Ver. 24. *Disentangled from possessions.*—The poor are sooner astonished at these words than the rich are so much as moved by them; the reason is, because men see the danger of others better than their own. It is much easier for a man to be contented without those things which he has not than to disengage himself from those which he possesses and not to trust in them. The poor may find a sufficient ground of trust and confidence in their poverty, since the kingdom of God is theirs; but the rich have reason to tremble in the midst of their riches. Whoever finds in them his rest, his joy, and his happiness, never thinks of seeking for these things in God. And there lies the greatest misery.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 25. *Camel and needle's eye.*—The illustration is drawn from one of the common, popular stories in the

East, which would be recognised by all. There were far-spread tales and legends of some enchanted city, with a gate of entrance which was a needle's eye. Among the applicants for admission was a rich merchant, riding on a camel, with its long neck and humped back, packed with precious wares. The rich man, who trusts in riches, fares like the merchant of the story. He cannot pass through the magic gate into the radiant city without the Divine spell which makes him free of the land of the spirit.—*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*

Ver. 27. *Salvation in the hands of God.*—It is the comfort of the humble that their salvation is in the hands of God; and it is the blindness of the proud that they would have theirs in their own. A true Christian is not at all alarmed to find here that without grace his salvation is impossible, because he knows that God can do everything for him, and that he himself can do all things in God through Jesus Christ.—*P. Quesnel.*

*"With God all things are possible."*  
—Thus God saved Zaccheus, and in this our day some rich and noble men seem to abound in every Christian grace; but though it be possible with God, we may be sure that the Lord did not intend by these words to cancel the warnings He had just uttered. Does the Lord here mean that all things are equally easy to God? By no means. All things may be equally easy to Him as looked at from the side of mere power—mere physical force; but God does not deal with intelligent creatures in the way of overwhelming power. So far as their will is concerned He deals with them, then, after such sort that they should co-operate with Him and yield willingly to Him; and the Lord, if He teaches us anything by the whole matter, teaches us this, that it requires more spiritual effort on God's part to deliver a man from the love of the world when the man's wealth enables him to enjoy all that the world has to offer.—*M. F. Sadler.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 28—31.

(PARALLELS: MATT. XIX. 27-30; LUKE XVIII. 28, 29.)

*The all-forsaking spirit and its reward.*—The apostles, on witnessing the incident of vers. 17-27, could not fail to make a personal application of it to themselves. They remembered the time—not long before—when each of them had been placed in a similar predicament: their own deceitful hearts soliciting them to remain as they were; and the imperious voice of One greater than their hearts saying, "Forsake all, and follow Me." And so they did. Will any say that these were poor men possessed of nothing worth mentioning, and that it required no great sacrifice to renounce a world which smiles not on such as they? Not so. A man can but give up his all. It costs a poor man as much to give up his daily labour, his mean abode, his little substance, as it does a rich man to part with his great possessions. The world is as dear and the ties of home are as strong to one as to the other.

1. *The sense in which this declaration was first made.*—The circumstances of the calling of these disciples were not, then, so different after all from those of the young man. But the result was exactly opposite. The one went away sorrowful; the others followed, and patiently continued with Him who called them. They not only acquiesced in their forlorn and destitute condition, but actually gloried in it, when they had respect unto the recompense of the reward. It was no dissatisfaction with their present mode of life, no hankering after the ease and comfort of former days, that prompted the exclamation, "Lo, we



have left all, and have followed Thee!" We learn from Matt. xix. 27 that Peter added the question, "What shall we have therefore?" We cannot suppose that he was ignorant of the nature and magnitude of that compensation, in consideration of which he and all of them had made so great a sacrifice. But in an affair of such importance, where so much present benefit is surrendered, the mind naturally seeks all the satisfaction it can procure in regard to the security of the investment. As the miser is not content to know that he possesses so much gold, but opens his bags and gloats over the glittering hoard day after day, so those who have staked their all for a future and distant good may be excused a little anxiety on the score of the anticipated return.

**II. The sense in which we may make the same renunciation.**—To "follow Christ" is a common expression to denote almost any relation to or reception of Him. But we cannot properly lay claim to a part of Peter's profession without accepting the whole. We may forsake all and follow Christ; or we may refuse to forsake all and decline to follow Christ; but to assent to the one and reject the other is impossible and absurd. Strange that men should ever dream of such a contradiction! The mistake arises, doubtless, from confounding the mere act of forsaking all for Christ with the mind and spirit which alone gives any value to the act, and which may exist equally without the act. The act may or may not be required; but no condition of life or change of circumstances can dispense with the all-forsaking spirit. The *letter* of this principle—"We have left all," etc.—if universally acted upon, would make the world a desert, and involve laws, morals, and religion itself in one universal chaos: the *spirit* of it is a spirit of peace, order, harmony, supports laws, perfects morals, and is the life and soul of religion.

**III. Wherein the all-forsaking spirit consists, and how it acts.**—1. We may discern it in a Christian's use of this world's good. Instead of literally forsaking all for Christ, it may be his duty to hold all for Christ, "ready to distribute, willing to communicate," "giving not grudgingly or of necessity, but cheerfully." This spirit is entirely opposed to that cool and calculating charity which is always saying, "Let the children first be fed; let us wait till the end of the year, and see what remains after all expenses are met, and all claims provided for." *That* is charity also: that has its praise; but not the praise of those who "seek first the kingdom," etc. *That* would have listened complacently to the commandment, "Give alms of thy goods"; but would have gone away sorrowful on being told, "If thou wilt be perfect, give all that thou hast." *That* may be called the *giving-up-something* spirit, not the *giving-up-all*. The Pharisee who gave tithes of all he possessed is an example of the one; the poor widow who cast into the treasury all that she had is the best illustration of the other. 2. Not in pecuniary sacrifices only, or even chiefly, is the all-forsaking spirit shewn. Ancient history tells of a king who enjoyed such uniform prosperity that he began to fear his good fortune might excite the envy of the gods, and end in some dreadful disaster. To prevent this he was advised to part voluntarily with the most valued possession he had, and that one the loss of which he would feel most. So he bethought himself which among all his treasures answered best to this description; and having found it (a gold ring or some such trifle), with his own hand he cast it into the sea. So the Christian manifests his readiness to give up all for Christ by giving up that which is most precious to him, whatever it be. To some persons their *time* is the most valuable of all their possessions; and a portion of every day, redeemed from the engrossing cares of business, and devoted to the glory of God and the improvement and benefit of the world, is the best proof of their willingness (if need be) to forsake all and follow Christ. Others, who are not selfish persons, nor wanting in sympathy with the concerns of their neighbours, are yet fond of ease and quiet, and averse

to everything likely to involve them in the strife and tumult of the world. These shew a disposition to forsake all for Christ when, from love for Him and His brethren, they give up their cherished retirement, and "go about" doing that good which the mere "liberal giver" can never accomplish. 3. So far we have thought of things which must be voluntarily renounced and cast behind us. Other things there are which, while we have them, we are permitted to enjoy, but which we may at any time be called on to resign. Indeed this is the tenure on which we hold *all* our precious things: riches make themselves wings, and fly away; the faces of beloved friends fade as we gaze on them; life itself is but a transitory vapour. Now with respect to such things as these the all-forsaking spirit has a twofold operation: when deprived of them, it meekly resigns; while enjoying them, it prepares to resign. Both are hard, especially the latter. It is hard to give up—harder still to procure and preserve that state of mind which is always ready to give up, always prepared to "hear the rod and who hath appointed it." This is the disposition for all to cultivate who profess and call themselves Christians. It is not the short, sharp conflict of a day, or even the protracted battle of many days, but the continual warfare of life, which ends only with all human affections and all earthly objects. For the Pauline conception of this disposition, see 1 Cor. vii. 29-31; and for the Johannine, 1 John ii. 15-17. 4. We should perhaps never think of reckoning among our treasures the lusts and appetites, human passions and natural affections, which belong to us as men. Yet are there no possessions which we can so strictly call our own, or which we are so unwilling to part with, as these. Do they not reside in and proceed out of the heart? And if a man's heart is not his own, what else, whether within or without the body, can be so called? As, on the other hand, if a man is able at the word of Christ to tear out his own heart and cast it from him, will he not much more forsake all that he hath besides? This is our Lord's meaning in Matt. v. 29, 30. In the extirpation of every thought, desire, and affection contrary to the will of God the all-forsaking spirit has ample scope for all its energies.

IV. **The reward of the all-forsaking spirit.** 1. Even the temporal condition of one whose heart and affections have been trained in the self-denying school of Christ is far better than that of those who use this world to the full, who say to their soul, Luke xii. 19. What is the great secret of human happiness? Is it not to be "without carefulness"—to enjoy our present comforts and to have no disquieting apprehensions of ills to come—to lie down at night with peace in our heart? Now this state of mind is the assured possession of him who has forsaken all for Christ. He, and none but he, can say, "I shall never be moved." The changes and chances—even the persecutions—of the world are nothing to him. He is "satisfied from himself." He brings forth his happiness from "the good treasure of his heart," and therefore it never fails. He receives a hundredfold more—in the testimony of his conscience, in the love of God, and in the patient waiting for Christ—than if he had grasped these things which crumble at a touch, or clung to these "bruised reeds, on which," etc. (2 Kings xviii. 21). 2. "And in the world to come—eternal life." There the Christian will meet again all those good things which he has, in heart and will at least, if not in deed, forsaken here. There he will find the worldly wealth which he scattered in Christ's name; the much-loved ease which, to promote Christ's interests, he was content to be without; the dear earthly delights which it was lawful for him to enjoy, yet more for Christ's glory that he should give up. There he "rests from his labours," etc. (Rev. xiv. 13). There, finally, whatever he enjoys, it is with the delightful consciousness, never felt on earth, that "his joy no man taketh from him," that his treasure is in heaven, and can neither fade nor fail.

*The trials and reward of the missionary.*—God, in order to determine His people to a cordial and zealous fulfilment of His will in all things, even in those things which are most trying to faith and repulsive to flesh and blood, employs every kind of influence which is suited to His character and adapted to their nature. He employs the influence of His authority to command them, of His displeasure to warn them, of His love to constrain them, of His ability and willingness to recompense, in order to induce and to win them. And there are in all genuine disciples principles powerfully susceptible of all these influences—meek obedience to His will, awe of His displeasure, constraint by His love, and a holy ambition to acquire the rewards of grace.

**I. The call of the missionary to make the sacrifices which our Lord here specifies.**—1. His call originates in the gracious purposes of God to have all the nations of the earth turned unto Himself by the power of the gospel. 2. This call flows from the commandment which the Redeemer has laid upon His Church to proceed in carrying this purpose into effect without delay (Mark xvi. 15; Acts i. 8). The faithful missionary hears the commandment, and hastens to the fulfilment of it, both in his labours and his prayers. 3. The missionary hears himself specially called by God to the service of His gospel in distant lands. He sees the purpose of God, and longs to have it fulfilled; he hears the command of God, and is moved to obey it; he perceives the promises of God to this work, and desires to seek the benefit of them; he feels the love of souls, and cannot be at rest while they are perishing; he sees the sacrifices and the dangers, but is not dismayed by them; he understands the nature of the work required, and believes that he may by grace be made instrumental in fulfilling it. And what is all this but the witness in himself that he is called of God to go far hence to the Gentiles, as if he heard a voice from heaven saying to him, “I have made thee a minister,” etc. (Acts xxvi. 16-18). 4. He feels called by the imploring cry of a perishing world, “Come over, and help us.” He is not insensible to their sorrows because they are thousands of miles distant from him, and seas roll between, and his eye has never looked upon their wretchedness.

**II. The sacrifices which are required of the Christian missionary.**—1. As the Church must enlighten the world by the instituted means of grace, some must go forth from it to carry these means and apply them to the heathen nations. 2. The missionary presents himself to the Church as ready to undertake all the labours, privations, and sacrifices in the work, and encounter all its difficulties and perils, if they at home will only support him with their habitual prayers, aiding and encouraging him under his trials, and ministering to his wants as far as his circumstances in providence may require. 3. Missionaries, in going forth to the heathen, must leave behind them not only their country, but relatives, and houses, and lands, and whatever nature esteems dear; and they have the feelings of nature in common with others. 4. They have unnumbered and unknown perils, privations, and sufferings to expect. They are exposed to the perils of the traveller both by sea and by land. The hazards to which they are exposed from climate are none of the least appalling to those who have the same love of life with other men. They are exposed to perils from those among whom they labour—from the barbarity of savage tribes, and the more monstrous enmity and persecution of civilised and nominally Christian colonists. Though they should escape all these evils, they have still difficulties and vexations to encounter in their work itself which are none of the least trying to the spirits of men—difficulties from language, from the inveterate ignorance of those whom they seek to enlighten, their incurable superstitions, or their confirmed habits of vice and ungodliness; while open resistance will usually be raised up by Satan from quarters whence it was least expected and where it proves the most effectual.



III. The motives which determine and encourage the missionary to embrace these sacrifices.—1. Love to the Redeemer, and desire that He may be glorified. 2. Admiration of the gospel as the “power of God, and the wisdom of God,” “unto the salvation of men.” 3. Compassion and love to mankind for Christ’s sake. He is impelled by some portion of the Spirit of Him who, moved by love for our race, left His Father’s bosom, and tabernacled for a season in our sinful and wretched world, partaking of its sorrows—whose “compassion was moved” to intensity “when He beheld the multitudes, because they fainted,” and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. This compassion may be felt strongly by the missionary even at home, but far more powerfully when he is set down in the midst of the objects of his sympathy and his eye has looked upon their miseries.

IV. Their reward.—1. They are “chosen vessels” to the most arduous and honourable part of the work of Christ on earth. To be occupied in this work is the highest glory of man, the chief happiness of the renewed mind. It assimilates to Christ, who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. It assimilates them to angels, who are occupied in “doing His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.” 2. The honour of eminent suffering for Christ. Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for the Church (Col. i. 24), and spake of suffering for Christ as an honour peculiarly “given” to such of the saints as were called to it (Phil. i. 29). And truly these sufferings cannot appear a small honour to any who behold in them “a manifest token” that they “shall reign with Him” (2 Tim. ii. 12), and know that they are “working” for them “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”—*Joseph Hay, M.A.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 29. *Sacrifice of all.*—Let no man say that this sacrifice of theirs was a trifling one. True it is they were poor men and had nothing to part with but their boats and their nets; but let us remember that the little that a poor man hath is as much to him as are riches to the wealthy. If a man be thirsty, it is as hard to persuade him to pour on the ground a single cup of water as to prevail upon another to cast away a whole barrel. It is a triumph of grace, then, when the poor forsakes his little, as well as when the rich counts his abundance as dross for Christ’s sake.—*H. Verschoyle.*

“*For My sake.*”—These three words make secular things sacred. You may go to your farm, or to your merchandise, you may sing songs, or paint pictures, or build houses, or make shoes, or heal bodies, and all these things become sacred if they are done

for the love of Christ: “*For My sake.*”—*F. Harper.*

Ver. 30. “*An hundredfold now.*”—What shall we say to this bountiful promise? Shall we say it is merely a flourish of words from the lips of Eternal Truth? God forbid! These are the words of truth and soberness. Looking back on the first disciples, we see this promise fulfilled: but how? 1. Though the disciples had but little left, or afterwards received but little in the stead of what they had lost, yet had they a good title to that little, and you can without difficulty conceive a man having greater enjoyment in the possession of one acre of land on a good title than ten acres on a disputed one. The child of God holds what he possesses as a gift conferred upon him in virtue of Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice; the ungodly holds his possessions as things already forfeited by his sin;

hence it is written, Ps. xxxvii. 16. 2. They had, besides, *the capacity* given them of enjoying their little, which is often denied to the most affluent. Contentment is the handmaid of real godliness; when it is joined to godliness there is great gain, because it gives a sweet relish to the most slender provision, it transforms straitness into abundance.—*H. Verschoyle.*

*The Christian's gain in this world.*—The Christian gains back again already in this world, in the higher form of real spiritual essence, whatever in the physical and symbolical form of his life he has forfeited: houses enough, in the entertainment afforded him by his spiritual associates who receive him; brothers and sisters, in the highest sense of the term; mothers, who bless and tend the life of his soul; children, of his spirit; lands, of his activity, of his higher enjoyment of nature, of his delights; and all this ever purer, ever richer, as an unfolding of that eternal inheritance of which it is said, "All things are yours," in spite of whatever persecutions of the world which

dim the glory of these things.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

Ver. 31. *First and last.*—On occasions that call for a great prompt sacrifice in the interests of a worthy cause, or upon the altar of truth and principle, have you not seen, now and again, some very religious and virtuous people wonderfully outdone by some who had had but little credit for conscientiousness or moral seriousness, men to whom you would never have looked for anything like the magnanimous spirit and conduct that distinguish them? The very greatest are often behind others for a while, like your dull, slow schoolboy, who turns out afterwards a brilliant man, while his more brilliant schoolmate, who got all the praise and prizes, dims and fades beside him, the tortoise in the end beating the hare. The best are often the tortoise in development, just because they are the best, and have so much more in them to develop.—*S. A. Tipple.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 32—34.

(PARALLELS: MATT. XX. 17-19; LUKE xviii. 31-34; JOHN xi. 53-57.)

*On the way to Jerusalem.*—Every act of Christ relates not only to those disciples who were the immediate witnesses of it, and to events which then and there transpired, but also to His whole Church through all future ages, and to events bearing upon the interests of that Church, till her probation on earth is finished, her numbers are made up, and she stands complete in Him before the throne above. The circumstances recorded in the text therefore bear a striking analogy to the spiritual circumstances of all believers in Christ.

**I. The course they pursued.**—The "way" here meant was the highway to Jerusalem, a type of the way which leads to heaven, along which all must pass who wish at last to reach that glorious world. 1. As there was a public, appointed, and common way to Jerusalem, so there is an appointed and common way to heaven. (1) The way of regeneration. (2) The way of repentance. (3) The way of holiness. (4) The way of faith in Christ. (5) The way of holy obedience. (6) The way of atonement. 2. They were in the way. It is not sufficient for us to know that there is a way, but we must see to it that we are in it. 3. They made advances in the way. It is not sufficient that we know the way to heaven, and be in the way to heaven; but we must make progress in it, and be like the disciples, ever going up. The new life within must grow and be constantly giving forth new fruits and beauties.

**II. The place of their destination.**—"Jerusalem." It was called the Holy

City, because there stood the temple, there dwelt the sublime symbol of the Divine Presence, there Divine worship was carried on, and there all God's people met to pay their Divine honours to His name. Its peace, its glory, its religious services, its enjoyment of the Divine Presence, and the security of its inhabitants caused it to be selected as a type of heaven, and hence John calls it the New Jerusalem and the City of God. There the weary pilgrim is at rest; the weather-beaten mariner has anchored for ever in the fair haven of peace; the worn-out warrior doffs his helmet and puts on his crown; the heavenly runner has reached the goal and entwreaths his brow with the garland of immortal honour; and all ascribe their glory to free and sovereign grace.

**III. The Leader they followed.** "Jesus went before them." This act of Christ was typical of glorious truths—truths which apply not only to those who immediately followed Him, but also to all His followers down to the end of time. 1. He went before them as their Mediator, to break down the impregnable barriers which sin had reared in their way to happiness, to God, and to heaven, and to give them free access to glory by His precious blood. 2. He went before them as their Glorious General, to subdue all their enemies, to lead them in the good fight of faith, to instruct and arm them for the holy war, to conduct them from conquest to conquest, and to bring them to final victory and immortal triumph. 3. He went before them as their Great Pattern of submission to the Divine will, of patience under suffering, of self-denial in the Divine service, of love to God and man, of a pure benevolence, of intense desire for the glory of God. 4. He went before them as their Infallible Guide in doctrinal truth, in practical holiness, and in the way to glory, honour, and immortality. 5. He went before them through death and the grave, to take away their terrors, and bring life and immortality to light. 6. He went before them in the first resurrection, to demonstrate to them His own almighty power and the acceptance of His great atonement on their behalf by the Father, and to teach them to rest in hope of that glorious day when He will change their vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. 7. He went before them to heaven, to take possession of it in their name, to prepare it for them and them for it, and to supply them with all needed grace, till they abide in His presence and see Him as He is.

**IV. The feelings they experienced.** 1. They were amazed. This appears to have been an impression made up of the mental elements of reverence, awe, admiration, and wonder, thrown over the disciples' minds by the sublime spirit and conduct of Jesus on this occasion. As you follow the Lamb to eternal glory, have you not often felt amazed? Have you not often felt amazed at the benevolence which led Him to become poor that you might be eternally rich?—amazed that He should have loved sinners so as to become for them a Man of Sorrows, that they might become participants of eternal joys?—amazed that He should have chosen, predestinated, called, renewed, sanctified, and preserved you, when, had you been left to yourself, you had now been in the road to eternal ruin?—amazed that you do not love Him more and serve Him better, who has done, is doing, and will do so much for you?—and amazed that the glories which He has revealed as the eternal portion of His faithful people do not produce upon you a more heavenly influence in this world of sin and woe? 2. "As they followed, they were afraid." Such were their weakness, their timidity, their imperfect knowledge, their erroneous views of His glorious mission and the true nature of His spiritual kingdom, that all the glorious majesty which He here displayed was not sufficient to preserve them from fear—fear for themselves, fear for Him, and fear for His cause. Believers fear for Christ—fear for His cause, fear for themselves—fear persecutions, dangers, afflictions, and death—because



their knowledge of Christ is defective, or because they do not look sufficiently to Him.—*W. Gregory.*

*The intensity of Jesus.*—What a wonderful picture is here! There are only a few words, only a few touches of the painter's brush, but they are the words of a loving heart, the touches of a skilful hand; and as we look at the picture we seem to realise what it means. Jesus is going up to Jerusalem with His disciples; it is the last time they will tread that road together; and on the way, instead of keeping close to Him, and hanging on His every word, they linger behind, wrapped up in their own petty trifling interests, disputing with one another as to which of them shall have the pre-eminence when the rewards of the kingdom are distributed. And Jesus goes before them, and they know it not; talking of the kingdom they have forgotten the King, and on a sudden they look up and see Him alone, sad, silent, grave, awful in the majesty of that sad face and eager on-looking eyes, and are amazed. Amazed, why? Because they see and read in all this what you and I can see and read there yet more clearly than they, a wondrous intensity. "Intense." This is one of the words adopted by a modern sect of fashion—a fashion which delights in making men look effeminate and women masculine, which puts mere mawkish sentiment in the place of noble deeds, mistakes a rhapsody of words for great realities, and has learned the art of taking the meaning out of grandest words. But while the word has been taken and spoiled by some, remember what a depth of meaning there is in this word "intensity." Would you know what it means? Then look at Jesus and you will learn.

I. You will see, first of all, in Him an **intensity of purpose**. Those fixed eyes, that set mouth, those firm steps, that grave face, they tell us of a Man who has set before Himself a great aim, who means by the help of God to accomplish it. It is the will of God, it is His Father's business, which He had set before Him from the first. And because His aim is so high, His purpose so simple and grand, therefore the life of Jesus is not like ours, a zigzag, crooked path, but a straight, onward, undeviating path.

II. But in His intensity we see also the **intensity of humility**. The consciousness of a great aim in life, the recognition of a great purpose, sometimes, because of our innate weakness, makes us conceited; it gives a man self-consciousness, and so spoils his aim. But as we look into the face of Jesus Christ, so sorrowful and sad, as we look onward to the object on which His eyes are fixed, as we listen to the words wherein He explains what all this means, we learn what intensity of purpose needs to control and guide it aright. The intensity of Jesus is one that stooped, that bowed itself—ay, it is an intensity which was "obedient even to the death upon the Cross."

III. But there is more than this; look again into His eyes and you will see what it is. Something more is wanted, something that shall join together the intensity of purpose with the intensity of humility. What is it that will make a man's life straight as the flight of an arrow, and yet at the same time lowliness itself? Nothing, I think, but the **intensity of love**. This intensity of Jesus, remember, is for us. 1. For us, because all this intensity was expended on our behalf. He goes up to Jerusalem before us as our Sacrifice. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." 2. For us, because this intensity may be ours. He goes up to Jerusalem before us as our Example (1 Pet. ii. 21). And hence you and I may go forward on the path God hath marked out for us, in some of this intensity of purpose, of humility, of love, which marked the life of Jesus. This intensity may be ours, for He was Perfect Man as well as Perfect God. His intensity was human intensity, made up of human purpose, human humility, human love. This

intensity may be ours, for we see something of this intensity in the lives of others. Other men have attracted us or shamed us as we have looked upon their intensity and compared it with our lack of it. — *C. J. Ridgeway.*

*Following Jesus fearfully.* Notice the singular combination, the compatibility and the union of two apparently contradictory things: though they “feared” they “followed,” and though they “followed” they “feared.” The fear was not enough to stop the following, nor the following sufficient to arrest the fear. There was a love in the fear which kept them following; and yet a nature in the following which still left them fearing. And I should not be wrong if I carried the connexion of these two thoughts a little further. They feared because they followed, and they followed because they were afraid. Fear is the strongest fascination. There is always a tendency to go to what we greatly fear. So the following led up to the fear, and the fear led up to the following. That walk up to Jerusalem appears to me strangely illustrative of the path by which many of you are going to heaven. This strange and, but for experience, this incredible condition of a man’s heart—the fear that follows, and the following that fears—whence is it?

**I. Certainly, if you were not a follower, you would not be a fearer.**—I never knew any one in my life begin to fear till God had begun to love him and he had begun to love God. The fear is an index that you are on the road. Because you are His the Spirit works those tender, awe-stricken feelings in your mind; because you are His men hate you; because you are His the devil harasses you; because you are His you know that “through much tribulation you must enter into the kingdom of God.”

**II. But is this, then, right?**—Have you ever known what it is, in any sense, to have undertaken—absolutely to have undertaken for anybody? And then have you felt the mortification of finding that person, for whom you had undertaken in everything, afraid, mistrusting? It is good to follow fearfully; but it is much better to follow trustingly.

**III. How is it that a real follower may be a real fearer?**—I will find the answer on that road up to Jerusalem. Why did the disciples fear? 1. They had not adequate ideas of Him whom they followed. So it is with you. If you knew the character of Christ, if you knew the work of Christ, you would be rid of that fear. 2. Though they loved Christ, they did not love Him as He deserved. If they had, the love would have absorbed the fear; they would have rejoiced to endure with Him, even to the death; the dignity, the happiness of partnership with Him would have swallowed up every other consideration. 3. They had not what their Master had—one, great, fixed, sustaining aim. There is nothing so ennobling, there is nothing which makes a hero, a martyr, a saint, like an object, distinct, lofty, worthy. Usefulness is such an object; the extension of Christ’s kingdom is such an object; the glory of God is such an object. 4. They had their fears undefined. It was the indefinite which terrified them. I should hardly say too much if I said that fear is indefiniteness. The terror is the mist which enwraps it.

**IV. Take, then, four rules.**—1. Fortify yourself in the thought of what Christ is—His person, His work, His covenant; and what He is to you. 2. Love Him very much, and realise your union with Him—the preciousness, the grandeur of that union, especially in sorrow, persecution, and death. 3. Set a high mark, and carry your life in your hand, so you may reach that mark, and do something for God. 4. Often stop and say deliberately to yourself, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” and do not go on till you have got an answer.

**V. But are you still afraid?**—Let me offer you this counsel. Do not care

about it ; do not care for your fears ; do not fear because you fear. Only follow on, follow on. The disciples came in all right to Jerusalem at last, though they did follow fearingly.—*J. Vaughan.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 32. *The way of the Cross.*—All nature trembles in a man, when God obliges him to take the way of the Cross. Christ goes forward therein, with a firm and even pace, and with a true courage. He who hazards his life in hopes of a better fortune exposes it only because he hopes not to lose it, and is but the more fond of it on this account ; as a covetous person is really the fonder of riches the more he exposes to the hazard of gaming, on the prospect of greater gain. True courage consists in the contempt of this present life through the hopes of that which is eternal ; and this contempt is so much the greater the more sure a man is of losing it, as Jesus Christ and the martyrs were.—*P. Quesnel.*

Vers. 33, 34. *Going up to Jerusalem.*  
—1. They were very near the end of one experience, and on the threshold

of the next. Every sudden transition awakens strange feelings. The change from one experience to another, when it appears to come with any measure of suddenness, comes to us with pathetic interest. This must have affected the disciples with exceptional power. 2. The feeling that an important experience has come to an end without our having made the best use of it, adds to our sense of loss and our feeling of regret at the thought of parting company with such an experience. Christ knew nothing of that sadness. In His experience everything had led up to the Cross ; and although there was a natural recoil on His part as the Son of Man from the agony of the Cross, and the dread experience of deadly contact with the world's sin, yet He had nothing on his own part to dread as He entered the conflict.—*D. Davies.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 34—45.

(PARALLEL : MATT. XX. 20-28.)

*The petition of Zebedee's sons.*—It was our Lord's custom, when any indefinite request was preferred to Him, to draw forth from the petitioner a more exact statement of his wants and desires. Of this we have one instance here (vers. 35, 36), and another in ver. 51. Can we have a stronger argument than this for the exercise of special prayer ? And can we have a plainer testimony to the need of self-examination before we venture to approach the throne of grace ?

I. *The request of the two brothers.*—"Grant unto us," etc. 1. This petition displayed their ignorance of Christ's plans. They looked for a kingdom of this world and a temporal Messiah. They were waiting with impatience for the moment when Christ should throw aside the mean disguise under which He now walked, and proclaim Himself in His true character, as the lawful inheritor of the throne of David. All enemies being subdued, and the whole world reduced to a state of peaceful subjection under His sceptre, then (they imagined) would begin such an earthly kingdom as would swallow up the splendour and the remembrance of all former ones. And they, the chosen companions and faithful followers of His low estate—what should they not have, what honours and



dignities might they not aspire to in His exaltation? 2. This petition was marked by forwardness and presumption. To ask that they might "sit, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His kingdom," was to seek for themselves a pre-eminence in that kingdom above their fellows; for these were the two most honourable seats in an Eastern court, and always reserved for those whose rank was only inferior to him who sat upon the throne. It is dangerous to say, "What wilt thou?" to persons whose requests are not likely to be guided by modesty or discretion. 3. Observe, also, the worldliness of this petition. It looks no farther, apparently, than the present life. (1) How many still follow Christ, knowing and caring nothing about the riches of His redeeming grace, but desiring to eat of the loaves and be filled! How many make a profession of religion for the sake of certain worldly advantages which they expect to gain by it! Not so gross, but equally dangerous, is the delusion of those who look for any part of the reward of godliness in this world. If we entered thoroughly into the mind of Christ, and saw eye to eye with Him the end He has in view, we should never think of asking of Him such mere temporal advantages as a good name, a quiet mind, a comfortable enjoyment of life, or even a peaceful and happy death. These are consolation certainly, but not the consolation of Christ; these are blessings, but not the blessing of Him who "came to bless us by turning," etc. (Acts iii. 26). (2) How many religious parents, like "the mother of Zebedee's children" (Matt. xx. 20), display a much greater anxiety about the worldly prospects of their offspring than about the welfare of their souls! Judging by their conduct, they think more of seeing them now "riding upon the high places of the earth," than of meeting them hereafter at the right hand of power in heaven.

**II. The Saviour's reply.**—"Ye know not," etc. 1. It may be said to all who pray for any temporal advantages, "Ye know not whether the issue of your prayer, if granted, will be for good or evil." We do not, however, bid you not ask at all for the things of this life; but when you do, ask discreetly, modestly, without importunity, with an entire submission to the will and wisdom of God, confident that He will not only give good things, but also refuse evil and hurtful things, to them that ask Him. 2. But Christ's answer to these petitioners seems to insist chiefly on their ignorance of the manner in which the great prizes (so to speak) in the distribution of heavenly honours were to be sought and won. Would they have preferred their request in this form had they realised that "through much tribulation," etc.? "My own exaltation," says the Saviour, "will be the reward of My previous sufferings and humiliation. If you desire to share in My Crown, you must expect to bear your part in My Cross. Are you able to do this?" Those who are contented to be called the least in the kingdom of heaven may perhaps escape with just the ordinary afflictions that fall to every man's lot. But those who aspire (as who would not?) to a place near the throne must expect to be called upon to resist unto blood, striving against sin, to go through fire and water, and to be baptised in the furnace of affliction, "that the trial of their faith," etc. (1 Pet. i. 7).

**III. The decision of the two brothers.** "We can." 1. Here we have a striking instance of the levity and rashness with which men undertake they know not what. Amongst Christ's followers, as indeed in the outset of any enterprise whatever, there was no lack of zealous promisers and hasty undertakers (Mark xiv. 29-31). But "pride goeth before destruction." When the hour of trial came, "all the disciples forsook Him and fled." 2. If you are wise, you will before beginning to build "sit down first and count the cost," etc. (Luke xiv. 28-30), duly sensible of your own weakness, relying only upon the ability and sufficiency which cometh from God. *Then* you may adopt as your own the golden maxim of the apostle (Phil. iv. 13).

**IV. The Saviour's concluding observation.**—1. "Ye shall indeed drink," etc. This is generally supposed to be an intimation of what should happen to these two brothers in the prosecution of their apostolic ministry. (1) James was the foremost in time of all the apostles to follow his Master to death (Acts xii. 2). (2) John was preserved alive the longest of all the apostles, and for that very reason doubtless endured and suffered the most. 2. "But to sit on My right hand," etc. The power of Christ, whether to reward or punish, is a judicial power, not to be exercised in a partial or capricious manner (if we could suppose Him capable of such weakness), but by certain fixed rules and principles. It is of the very essence of a judge to judge according to law. Surely we do not need to be told that in the distribution of heavenly honours there is no room either for partiality on the part of the dispensers or solicitation on the part of the candidates. Nor does it diminish aught from the dignity of the Son that He should assign the high places of His kingdom to those who are the blessed and approved of His Father. And who are they? "Not every one that saith," etc. (Matt. vii. 21). "Holy and humble men of heart"; "Israelites indeed"; "the true circumcision"; they that "worship God in the spirit," etc. (Phil. iii. 3). They who "strive to enter in at the strait gate"; and, being entered, strive to advance farther and farther, always "pressing toward the mark," etc. (Phil. iii. 14). Above all, they who in this life have "received their evil things," and counted them as good; who have been great and patient sufferers, whether "in mind, body, or estate"; who have "come out of great tribulation," etc. (Rev. vii. 14). 3. If we would know these assessors of the Saviour, these right-hand and left-hand men, while they are upon earth, or if we would determine whether we ourselves are of the number, we must attend to the signs which He has given us (vers. 42-45).

*The request of James and John.*—**I. The request.**—This request is a remarkable instance of that slowness and dulness of heart with which our Lord had to deal, even among those who understood Him most. For you observe that it was made immediately after a very clear prediction of His Cross and Passion. You may judge how great was the solitude of heart, the isolation in which the Incarnate Son abode on earth, when even His intimates and closest followers could so little sympathise with His purposes or enter into His thoughts.

**II. Our Lord's answer.**—He does not deny that there are high places in His kingdom, but He unveils the terms on which only they may be won. Nearest to Him they might be, but then it must be a nearness in self-abasement, self-sacrifice, and suffering. The very terms Christ uses spoke of suffering: the poison-cup was not seldom used of old as a mode of execution—you remember the hemlock of Socrates; and water was sometimes the instrument of death—we read of being drowned in the depth of the sea. They were terms, moreover, which the Old Testament connected with suffering; "the cup of trembling," "the cup of the Lord's fury," express some discipline very terrible to flesh and blood: "I will take the cup of salvation" is by some interpreted, "I am ready to undergo even the pains of martyrdom"; and the mention of the baptism also would recall such expressions as these, "All Thy waves and storms are gone over me." And the sharp searching trial implied in these words would only be intensified when, at a later period, they heard their Master speak of that terrible agony which they were called to witness as His cup—"Let this cup pass from Me"; when they stood before His Cross, and saw His life-blood streaming from His head, and hands, and feet, and side, a very baptism of blood. Were they able to face such things as these? to go through those trials, that anguish, coming in various shapes, which were necessary to prepare in them those graces, only as possessing which they could stand high in the kingdom of the Man of Sorrows,

of the Lamb slain? In short, in these words our Lord intimates the use of suffering as a preparation for glory, for the presence of God. Not that suffering necessarily does this. It can act on us only according to the state we ourselves are in, and a corrupt heart it is likely only to embitter and harden. Suffering can bless but those who receive it meekly and in the love of God.

**III. What a bearing has all this upon ourselves.**—1. Have we not often asked our Blessed Lord to place us near Him, to shew us His truth, to open our eyes to enable us to cast in our lot with Him, to give us a throne among His saints, to set us on His right hand at least, if not upon His left? What do such prayers imply? (1) To cast in your lot with Christ, what is that? To share the portion of One whom the world rejected, whose goodness those about Him could not appreciate. Are you ready to do that? to be called an enthusiast? to lose the support of the many who stand by that which is popular and moderate and safe? to become in their estimation “a fool for Christ’s sake”? (2) To know Christ’s very truth; do you understand that to wish this is to draw down on yourself the agony of seeing truths which the world will not accept, while you see also that she is suffering for not accepting—the agony which prophets of old knew, of having a message, a revelation, which men will not hear from you, which is the only panacea for the ills of society, of nations, of homes, and yet to which they will not listen? (3) To be like our Lord, you have asked that. But have you considered through what you must pass, that you may have opportunities of exercising longsuffering, forgiveness, calmness, like His? Have you thought what a discipline it requires, what self-denials you must exercise to prepare in you a mind like that of Jesus? 2. And yet do we withdraw you from these high aspirations because there is a price to pay for their fulfilment? Ah, no: those are indeed your most blessed moments, your most blessed thoughts, when you long the most to be like your Incarnate Lord, feel most the attracting influence of His purity. Cleave to them, part not with them, cost you what they will. Whatever the price you must pay for the fulfilment of those wishes, however bitter the cup or the baptism, there are some thoughts which will strengthen you to bear them. (1) You may think of them as *His* baptism and *His* cup; as sufferings and trials which He has sanctified for you by first bearing them Himself, taking His own deep draught before the cup is handed on to us. (2) You may think of the sympathy of Christ; for there is that close oneness of life between Christ and His people that their afflictions become His. (3) There is the strength supplied to you in sacramental grace. The very terms our Lord uses to denote His sufferings, and His people’s, are borrowed from those two great means of grace, whereby our union with Him is begun and perfected. We have our baptism into Him, as the guarantee that our souls have been brought into a relation of grace to Him, into a capacity of receiving life from Him, which nothing but our own sinfulness can render nugatory. We have that other Sacrament of His Body and Blood, the cup of blessing and the bread of life, wherein we can again and again draw nigh to Him, and unite ourselves with Him, and reinvigorate, as it were, the wasting frame of spiritual strength. This baptism and this cup, since they bring the faithful soul into such direct connexion with Him through whom we may do all things, are able to equip us for all the demands of patience, of sweetness, of strength, which that other baptism, that other cup, may make upon us.—*Canon Turnock.*



OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 37. *Is ambition wrong?*—What is ambition? Ambition is an instinct of nature, a desire to rise; and, like all other instincts, capable of good and evil. Satan took hold of it, and said, “Ye shall be as gods.” Jesus enshrined it, “Ye shall sit on thrones”; “Be ye perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect.” When a man wishes to go out of his own line into another, to which evidently God has not called him, his ambition is wrong. When a man tries to get to the very top of his own line, his ambition is right. When a man seeks great things for himself, only for himself, it is a worldly ambition. When a man pursues great things for usefulness, for the Church, for Christ, it is the same principle, but it is consecrated, pious, and good.—*J. Vaughan.*

Ver. 38. “*Ye know not what ye ask.*” —Often we offer large petitions with small meanings or motives, and would be overwhelmed if they were granted. When they ask for thrones, they ask the path leading thither—the discipline fitting for them, the service which wins such influence.—*R. Glover.*

*Cup and baptism.*—The word “cup” is often used by sacred and other writers to signify the portion of good and evil which is assigned to men in this life. It probably arose from the custom in ancient times of the master of the household distributing to his children and servants a certain separate allowance of meat and drink each by himself, differing in quality and quantity according to their desert. The same custom was also observed in entertaining guests (see Gen. xliii. 34). In allusion to which custom the word “cup” is used for the dispensation of Providence—the Almighty, as our common Master and Father, appointing to each one his respective share of suffering and enjoyment. “Baptism,” which signifies immersion, is also familiarly used in Scripture to denote a person being overwhelmed with calamities,

as it were with a flood of waters. The “cup,” then, which Jesus was to drink of was one of affliction; the “baptism” with which He was to be baptised was that of a cruel and ignominious death. And they who should follow Him in His career were to drink deep of that cup of suffering and be immersed in the darkest horrors of human barbarity.

Ver. 39. *The ambitious person finds nothing difficult, provided he can but raise himself.*—He easily presumes upon that which he cannot perform, to obtain that which he cannot deserve. It was but a moment ago, and these men were seized with fear and amazement at the bare sight of the way to Jerusalem; but one passion weakens another, and, like a burning fever, supplies a man with fresh strength and courage.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 40. *No true honours are lightly won in either earth or heaven.*—None are arbitrarily given; for to give honours for which we are unfit would be no kindness. Besides, the true crown is a flowering of our nature, not a garland lifted and put on. Accordingly the right-hand and left-hand thrones go to those fullest of the Saviour’s spirit, and who, of all men, have been most like Him in their work and sacrifice.—*R. Glover.*

*Lessons.*—On the whole incident note—1. How noble these men are in their very faults; they seek not money, fame, or ease, but the honour that comes from God. 2. How graciously Christ deals with what is faulty in us. 3. How, in answering our prayers, He has to answer not the great words, but the small meaning, lest we should be overwhelmed. 4. In the other world there will be no unequal distribution of rewards, but each will receive what fits him.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 41. *Ambition of the clergy.*—The ambition of clergymen is a great scandal in the Church, and is frequently

an occasion of emulations, enmities, divisions, schisms, and wars—of all which the displeasure and indignation of the apostles give us an imperfect shadow and resemblance. If apostles, trained up with so much care in the school of charity and humility, notwithstanding are not free from this vice, what effects will not ambition produce in souls, wholly immersed in flesh and blood, which have no motion but from their passions, no law but that of their own desires!—*P. Quesnel*.

Ver. 42. *The principle of scramble.*—There is a strange ambition ruling in the hearts of multitudes—to be ministered to instead of ministering. Men wish to get rather than to give. Hence the universal scramble in commerce. Hence the worldwide diffusion of the spirit of selfishness—a spirit whose tendency is to turn every man into an Ishmaelite, with his hands and heart against all other men, and all other men's against him. One might have expected men would see that the plan of seeking to receive ministry rather than to give it is short-sighted and suicidal. Suppose you were one of an association of a hundred persons, all jealous of one another, each seeking to take advantage of all the rest, and trying to get them all to minister to him. What is likely to be the result? Each will shut himself up as in his own castle to defend himself against all the rest. All the energy that each possesses will be expended on promoting his own particular advantage; and not one will get from any of his neighbours a really helping hand, if the circumstances will admit of the help being withheld. This is the principle of scramble—every one for himself and for himself alone. It has been tried in every country and in every coterie under heaven, and everywhere with lamentable results. All tyrannies have sprung from it. All wars have been begotten by it. All poverty is its child. All household feuds and family alienations are to be traced to its baleful influence.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Vers. 43, 44. *Mutual service* is something very practical. Do not put it aside as one of the counsels of perfection, or as a theory that will not work on weekdays. Mutual service may be the abiding principle of every-day life in any station of domestic or public or mercantile life. Think, first, how much is done for us—what service we receive and absorb. Let our imagination travel for a moment over the scenes where toil is even now going on for us, to the far countries whence come our food-supplies—all the world laid under tribute; think of our sailors in their hard and dangerous work; visit in fancy our miners, our labourers, our factory-workers, our clerks, the myriad-handed, myriad-headed service of a great city. Think what has been the labour of creating the civilisation, the conquest over nature, even the delicate organisation of faculties that we unconsciously inherit. Which of us can repay to the existing generation, still more to the world, the vast debt we owe? Are we not indeed under a sort of spell that forces us to sit, and be clothed, and carried about, and amused by the labours of others? No, it is not so. You may break the spell. It is open to all of us to render service to others over and above our business in life. We may render bodily service; and we know how high a value our Lord puts on the service of our bodily needs. We may diminish the scale of our own comfort, that we may raise the standard of the comfort of those who work for us; we may thus serve our own generation even in its physical needs, and this is an absolute duty. But there is other service than this. When material nature is conquered, its wastes tilled, its wild beasts slain, there remains the harder problem of conquering human nature, reclaiming its waste places, casting out its evil spirits. There is the noblest service of all, the spiritual service of lifting the ignorant and degraded, of supplying “the spiritually indispensable—the bread of life.” Here are our worlds to conquer, our

unknown seas to traverse. Men have toiled for us in body, and are toiling, that we in our turn may toil for them and give them light, and life, and hope, and heaven. This is the true mutual service, and this we may all render.—*J. M. Wilson, D.D.*

Ver. 45. *Christ's ministry and self-sacrifice.*—I. **The negative side**—"the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto." This clears the ground. The Son of Man is not a self-seeker. That is the meaning of the manger in little Bethlehem, the want of a place to lay His head, the departure into a mountain alone when they would make Him a king.

II. **The positive and general side**—"but to minister." This is the character of His life—the Son of Man ministers to the sons of men. He restores health, brings back the dead, speaks and there is a great calm. Then after a hard day's ministering He rises a great while before day to pray—to pray for strength to minister more. And it was all of His own free choice. He came to minister, and He ministers still.

III. **The positive and precise side**—"and to give His life a ransom for many." The first two clauses point to His life; this points to His death. And it rises to a climax—this is His greatest deed. He gave His life for many. So He places a great value on His life. His single life is an equivalent for many lives. I am in the circle of the many. Like Paul I say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."—*A. Scott.*

*Service and sacrifice.*—1. The greatness of God is, in one point of view, service. Every power in nature is a power of God, so that in steam, electricity, and the like we are in different ways taking advantage of God's goodness as a servant. 2. In all nature God is a servant, and finds joy in the service. But in redemption it is otherwise. This is the highest service God has rendered man, and it has the element of *sacrifice* in it. 3. Thus the

death of Christ is an example of service and sacrifice—of the highest form of service, service which demands what it is hard to give. But there is more in it than that. There is substitution. His death was the climax and consummation of a life of ministering; but it was a death in the sinner's room, without which the sinner could not have been saved.—*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*

"*Even the Son of Man.*"—The Saviour was perfectly conscious of His own intrinsic elevation and dignity. It was not because He could do no better that He came into the world amid poverty and lived among the poor. Of His own free-will, and although He was infinitely rich, He stooped into the valley of humiliation. But He never forgot the height from which He had descended, and back to which He was by-and-by to re-ascend, leading captivity captive.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

*Gifts to the ministering Christ.*—He came not to get, but to give. Such was His aim. But He *got*, nevertheless, and still gets, and will continue to get, through all time and through eternity. He cannot help getting. He gets gratitude. Oh, how much of it! and yet not one atom more than He deserves. He gets devotion of hearts, such as no other being ever gets or got. All the noblest souls that are either in the higher places of society or in the lower places and the hidden nooks and corners count it their joy to do service to Jesus. They do minister to Him, even as also, though on a lower plane, they minister to their fellow-men.—*Ibid.*

*Christ's life the ransom for our life.*—The suggestions of this statement are very grave. 1. Our life is forfeit. 2. Sin is so great an evil that even God cannot, without sacrifice, free us from it. 3. To let us off without penalty or atonement would make us indifferent to doing wrong. 4. In love to man God punishes sin. 5. And to save thoroughly Christ shares with us that punishment. Are we thankful for the great redemption? humbled by



the Cross? saved by it? Be grave with the Saviour's gravity in your thoughts of sin and of salvation.—*R. Glover.*

*The needed ransom.*—The surrender of the life of Christ unto death was the needed ransom. No wonder! A ransom is something valuable. It may be all but invaluable. Certainly the life of Christ was inestimably valuable, more valuable by far than myriads of other lives—the lives of nobles, or princes, or kings, or queens. Yet He came into the world, and into our nature, that He might give His life a ransom for many. Oh, the incalculable value of a life such as Christ's—a life so rich in possibilities of enjoyment, and so rich in goodness, unselfishness, and every kind of moral beauty and excellency! Thus valuable and invaluable was the life of Jesus; and yet it was that very value that made the surrender of His life, in connexion

with the great moral government of the Father, something incalculably better, and more glorious and more glorifying to the law, than a mere equivalent for all the penalties that could have been inflicted on the guilty.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

*The ransom paid for all.*—The word “many” is not used to suggest that the ransom was paid for fewer than all. It is another idea altogether that is intended. *All* are not always *many*. *All* the queens of Europe are not *many*. *All* the great poets of the world are not *many*. *All* the inhabitants of a hamlet are not *many*. But the persons for the salvation of whose souls the Son of Man gave His life as a ransom were and are *many*—incalculably numerous. Yet not one was left out of His regard and interest and sympathy.—*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 46—52.

(PARALLELS: MATT. XX. 29-34; LUKE XVIII. 35-43, XIX. 1-28.)

*Bartimeus.*—There are three powers which, interacting upon one another, work out the drama of life. There is the power within us, the power of self. There is the power without us, the power of the world. In proportion as we can make the power within operative on the power without we are successful. But above these two powers there is a third—the power of God over all. If the power of self, working in conjunction with the power of the world, brings about success or failure, the realisation of the power of God is the way to that best success—the success over ourselves and the world, the victory of character. The story of Bartimeus shews us a man in difficulties, and exhibits his conduct when face to face with these three powers of life.

1. The world is the first power we shall think of in this case. 1. The world has its power. There is something which the world can do, and that something is what the world on the whole very readily does. Bartimeus found that this was the case. The world gave pity, also practical evidence of its pity. The world gave its alms. 2. But the world has its limitations. The one thing which the man most needed was the one thing which the world could not give. The world could not supply his real need, for his real need was sight. The world seldom can reach the real needs of men. She can bestow honour, she can alleviate suffering, but she cannot heal or satisfy the soul. The gifts which the world gave to Bartimeus, kind and well intentioned as they were, were just those gifts which reminded him most keenly of his misfortune. In receiving the alms of men he felt his dependence. Men in all ages have found out the world and its limitations. Like Severus, who had reached the supreme height of power, they have tried everything and found that everything was naught. Like Augustine, they have found that the heart which is made for greater things

cannot rest in the lesser. Like Lacordaire, they have exclaimed with indignation and loathing, "I cannot leave my heart in this heap of mud." The world, great, kindly, and generous as it is, cannot satisfy the desire of the soul. 3. The world, too, has its moods. The society in which we live is kindly and well disposed. It is not hard-hearted, but it likes to help in its own way, and it is relentless in its opposition to those who strike out their own line. Society has its moods as well as its limitations. The story of Bartimeus illustrates this, for it not only shews us what the world could do and what it could not do, but it also shews us what it did do. The action of the world in this respect may be described in one word—hindrance. It hindered the man in his attempt to realise his most cherished dreams. He desired to be no longer a profitless and dependent creature, but to be restored to the possession of sight, and with it to that capacity for self-direction which is requisite for true life. The moment came when it was within his grasp. The Healer, the Prophet of Nazareth, endowed with the powers of restoration, was near. Bartimeus lifted up his voice in earnest appeal. Society chided Bartimeus for his cry. "They rebuked him that he should hold his peace." The picture is true to life. The world is intolerant of the best aspirations of men; it resents the attitude of those who take a line of their own. The world has a way of stifling the utterance of the great and unexpected voices which are lifted up in earnest desire or noble appeal. Genius has found it so. The world has hindered, frowned upon, and too often clamoured down the man whose intellectual range was beyond the grasp of average dulness. Philanthropy has found the same. Even a Howard and a Wilberforce cannot escape detraction; and society has shouted against those who have cried aloud in the cause of humanity, and has bidden them to hold their peace. The reformer has fared no better. There are always Eliabs to be found who chide the aspirations of young faith. And even apostles proclaiming a nobler life and spiritual emancipation to society will be clamoured against as those "who turn the world upside-down."

II. **What the man Bartimeus did for himself.**—There are two principles which are essential to independent success. One is the principle of self-dependence, the other is that of single-mindedness. Bartimeus illustrates both these principles in his action. 1. He was self-reliant. He took his own course. He did not abandon his purpose because of the clamour of the crowd. This is a lesson which life soon teaches us. Men begin life by hoping much from their patrons. They know men who have influence; they look forward to an easy grasp upon the object of their desires. But they soon unlearn this delusion. Like Dr. Johnson, they discover that too often the office of patron is to leave the struggling man unassisted, and to encumber him with help when he no longer stands in need of it. Men soon discover that their own best patron is their self-reliance. It is this quality which Bartimeus displays. He is heedless of the crowd; but it is not the heedlessness of a coarse and indifferent nature. It is the heedlessness of a man who knows what he wants, and who has the courage to dare all to secure it. It is the quality of soul which Wellington displayed when he planted himself on the heights of Torres Vedras, and held to his choice in spite of the clamour, abuse, and accusations of home ignorance. He knew what he was doing, and he was in earnest. He was not to be turned aside from his purpose because of the empty chatter of impatient and inexperienced criticism. 2. The companion virtue of self-reliance ought to be single-mindedness. Single-mindedness seeks, by concentration of all the attention and all the powers upon one thing, to secure the end in view. It is the spirit which will not be turned aside or seduced. It knows that some sacrifice is needed, and it is ready to pay the price. It compels the attention of the whole mind to the thing in hand. It will cast overboard the most precious freightage

in order to reach its harbour successfully. This spirit also Bartimeus displays. It is necessary for him to reach Christ. He must run no risk of failure. The long robe about him was useful enough as he sat by the gate of the city the whole day through. But it might prove a hindrance to his advancing footsteps. There is no hesitation in his action. If there is any chance of its being in his way, it must be sacrificed. He flings aside his robe, and so, unimpeded, advances towards the Lord. Greatness possesses the courage which can sacrifice what may be useful, when it may also prove a temptation or an encumbrance to its advancing march. Caesar knows when to burn his boats. Industry knows that many a social pleasure and many an hour of relaxation must ruthlessly be sacrificed if ultimate victory is to be achieved. Like Lord Eldon, it knows that the way to success is to live like a hermit and work like a horse! The message of successful lives is the lesson of a single-minded devotion to the object in view. That which is the counsel of successful lives is the command of religion. For the sake of the higher life the encumbrances of the lower must be laid aside. The garments of the old life must be left behind. When the soul is filled with one strong passion, such single-mindedness becomes easy. To Bartimeus it was as nothing to cast aside his robe. He thirsted for sight. What was raiment compared with such a dowry? To those who thirst for the vision of God no sacrifice seems too great. Indeed, it is only those who are possessed of a spirit ready to sacrifice all who can behold that light.

**III. What Christ did for him.** When we have spoken of self-reliance and single-mindedness, we have not said the last word about success. As far as temporal life is a conflict with the world these two are indispensable factors of success. But there are ranges of life which lie outside the compelling forces of energy and self-denial. Life is not merely energy, industry, achievement. There is place for repose and worship as well as for zealous activity. Man is not merely a busy, achieving sort of creature; he is a receptive being also. Self-assertion works well against the world; but in the presence of Him who is greater than the world, the spirit of self assertion drops away. As Bartimeus stands before Christ his whole demeanour is changed. He is no longer the strong and stout pleader of his own cause and his own need. Jesus commanded him to be brought; and when he stands before Christ he is silent till Christ speaks. He stands as one who waits. It is right that it should be so. There are gifts which come only to waiting souls. There are utterances which are open to all the world, which only they hear who wait to hear—

“Celestial harmonies then only heard  
When the heart listens.”

This calm and trustful attitude of mind has a kind of natural devoutness in it. It recognises a source of inspiration greater than itself. Great men of different faiths and different ages have realised this. Avicenna found his subtlest syllogisms given him after meditation and worship. Haydn prayed before he composed. Many a man of genius can truly say of some of his best works, “They were given to me.” Inspirations are for men who can and will wait upon God. In the Albert Memorial Chapel at Windsor one of the most suggestive pictures on the walls exhibits this aspect of the soul waiting for God’s gift. David and the harpists of Israel are represented with their instruments in their hands. Their fingers hang listless upon the strings. Their heads are bowed. All the appliances of their art are in their grasp, but the Divine gift is not yet. They are waiting for the inspiration from on high. So Bartimeus, the man of energy and self-assertion, waits before Christ for the gift which his force and his determination cannot seize, which must be given as love’s free gift. He waits till Christ asks, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” To say that our Lord shewed love to the blind man is to



say what is true enough and obvious enough; but it does not help us to the full appreciation of Christ's personal dealing with Bartimeus. His action shewed much more than a vague and limp benevolence. His love was ever exerted with an everlasting moral influence upon those whom He helped.

1. There was sensibility. Here, amid the clamour of the crowd, He detects the voice of want, just as at another time He knew at once when the weary and suffering woman laid a trembling finger on His robe. His love was of that delicate and responsive order which makes kindness twice welcome in being so obviously the outcome of a sympathetic and ready heart.

2. There was decision. No clamour or noise of discountenancing crowds could stay the march of His love. Jesus, in the midst of the outcry against Bartimeus, stood and commanded him to be brought. In one moment the clamouring crowd changes its demeanour. "Be of good cheer. Rise: He calleth thee." Nothing succeeds like success. A little firmness, and the strong man brings the whole multitude over to his side. The man who knows what he means, and has the requisite firmness to pursue it regardless of noise, is like a solid mass floating on the surface of the water which draws the purposeless jetsam to its side.

3. There was judgment. He does not heal the blind man all at once. There is a pause; there is a question. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" The need was obvious, but it was well the man should express it. The interchange of speech created a feeling of confidence; the bond between him and Christ became one through which moral sympathy might flow. It was no cold exercise of power; it was no heartless magic which restored the sight. It was power exercised by wise and loving sympathy. Here we touch a principle which may shed light upon the mystery of prayer. Why go through the form of asking God to help us, when God, if He be all-knowing, knows all about our needs? If all-powerful, He can help us. If all-good, He will. What need is there, then, of prayer? But is prayer only so to be measured? Is the establishment of sympathetic confidence between the soul of man and the love of God to count as nothing? 4. There was capability. With Christ, love and power were one. "Receive thy sight." The words are spoken, and Bartimeus looks up. The restoration of sight is restoration to his true and complete manhood. He can see things as they are. It is this which Christ can bestow on all. It is the power to see in their true relationship the great forces of life—the world, self, God—the force without us, the force within us, and the power above us. It is the power to see God as He is—in His purity and lovingness as well as in His might. It is the power to see ourselves as we are in our weakness and dependence, in our sinfulness and foolishness. It is the power to see the world and life as they are, and therefore to see life not as the opportunity of accumulating the things which perish, but as the opportunity of being what we ought to be, and of doing what we ought to do.—*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 46. *The uncomfortable situation of the blind.*—In what uncomfortable circumstances are some of the children of men placed! One is deprived of his eyes, another of his ears, a third of his legs, and a fourth of his judgment. Of all these there are none more pitiable and helpless than the blind.

**I. The uncomfortable situation of the blind.**—1. They are deprived of the benefit of light, which is so cheerful and animating. 2. They are deprived of the advantages of reading, either for instruction or entertainment. 3. They are incapable of following the common occupations of life, by which to earn

their bread. 4. They are in a great measure dependent upon others.

**II. Some means by which to alleviate the miseries of the blind.**—1. To furnish them with some employment, which may prevent them from being a burden to the public. 2. That the occupation be of such a nature as gently to engage the mind without fatiguing it, and by diverting their attention to make them less a burden to themselves. 3. That they be taught the principles of the religion of Jesus, which are so nobly suited to afford consolation under the hardest lot, and to render them contented and happy.—*D. Johnston, D.D.*

Ver. 47. In the Nazarene Bartimeus saw the Messiah. Why did he so? Why more than the rest of the crowd that followed? Can we doubt the reason? Can we be in a difficulty about it? He was blind now. But there had been a time, perhaps, when he was able to see. If so, he had used his eyesight for a heavenly purpose. He had read and marked and inwardly digested the truth as it is in Jesus. Happy Bartimeus! He can see clearer than the most keen-eyed. The penetration of philosophy is nothing to his; he understands all mysteries; he pierces the thick palpable darkness; he sees through the veil of the outward sense the glory and the majesty of Him who is the Light of the world. What an example for us to follow! We may not be dark-visioned, like Bartimeus, but we shall have our hours of the heart's darkness, or of moral twilight. How shall we prepare for them? Most surely in the way that he prepared—by reading God's Holy Word, by diving into its hidden depths, by praying for enlightenment, by committing to our memories, and by treasuring up in them the holy texts of promise or of prophecy which lie like jewels within that great sea of wonder.

Ver. 48. *Want and faith not to be silenced.*—Could their hands stop the

mouth of him who spoke and felt as Bartimeus did? Nay; for he had a double tongue. His faith and his misery alike were speaking. You may stifle almost anything else; but there is a life and an energy in want and in faith which nothing can overpower. Did the winds and the waves ever prevent the seaman that has been washed overboard from crying for the cable to be thrown him? Is not his cry the mightier for their tempestuous riot? It is the cry of nature, the cry of that voice which God has implanted in all. But the cry of the new nature is in this case added to that of the old; it is the cry of grace and of nature too. It is nature that feels the want; it is grace that believes the remedy.

Ver. 49. *"Commanded him to be called."*—By this circumstance Christ administered reproof and instruction: reproof, by ordering those to help the poor man who had endeavoured to check him; instruction, by teaching us that, though He does not stand in need of our help, He will not dispense with our services, that we are to aid each other, that though we cannot recover our fellow-creatures we may frequently bring them to the place and means of cure.—*W. Jay.*

Ver. 50. *Renunciation.*—The action of the blind man in casting aside his garment in order to come to Jesus means to us much more than a mere revelation of personal character—a disclosure of the faith and zeal of the blind beggar. It may be taken as a type of the removal of the hindrances of whatever kind that prevent a soul from coming to Jesus as its Saviour. 1. The necessity of casting away our garment of self-righteousness in order to come to Jesus. Every man thinks that he has whereof to boast—his acts of worship or kindness, his upright character and goodness of heart. We are slow to believe that God does not ask some valuable consideration at our hands, and that if

we would seek His blessing it is not necessary for us to be furnished with some price or equivalent to give. We have our formularies, our ordinances, our offerings, which we think will open our way; and we exact from ourselves certain spiritual qualifications as a preparation. But if we are to be cured of our blindness and poverty, we must fling this garment aside. If we would get near enough to Jesus to get personal benefit from Him, we must have the conviction inwrought in us of our utter destitution of true religion. We must be brought to believe that we do not believe. We must hide our poverty no longer from ourselves. We must honestly and humbly take the beggar's place and raise the beggar's cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

2. The necessity of casting away the garment of effete forms and methods in order to grow in knowledge and grace. Religion itself is often made a hindrance in the way of coming nearer to Christ. What would happen if, when the warm, quickening sun of spring is calling every living thing to new growth and development, the buds of the trees persisted in retaining the scales in which they were wrapped up, merely because they had been indispensable in preserving the vitality of their buds during the winter's frosts and storms? There would be no foliage, no blossom or fruit, no formation of new wood for man's use, no shade for the earth and its creatures. The whole economy of nature would suffer grievous loss and be deranged. Nay, more, the arrested buds themselves would either die into hard knotty excrescences, or would be transformed into formidable thorns. And so, if we persist in retaining the old effete wrappings of religion merely because they were formerly, at an earlier stage of growth, indispensable, when the summer sun of a higher faith is quickening us and calling us to a fuller Christian life, we shall become mere dry sticks in the vineyard of the Lord, providing no shade or fruit or beauty for ourselves or others; we

shall derange the whole economy of the Church by our deadness and conservation, and our arrested growth will be transformed into a wounding thorn.

3. The necessity of casting away in the end the garment of the body by death in order to be present with the Lord, and to be effectually cured of all our poverty and blindness. All nature is deciduous. The bud casts off its scales in order to produce its foliage; the flower casts off its petals in order to produce the fruit; the fruit decays in order to liberate the seed; the seed dies in order that the germ may grow. The worm leaves behind its silken tomb in order to emerge a butterfly. And at every stage of advancing life some old garment that suited an old purpose is cast away. So we cast away our body every seventh year in order to grow and mature our physical nature. And in the end we must cast away our body itself in order to finish our development and emerge into ampler life. As the growth of the young foliage of spring from the cast-off husks of autumn is a process of life and not of death, so in the expansion of the soul through the casting off of the body death loses all the elements which make it death. It is a process of life and development—in the harmony, and not out of the harmony, of the Divine order. A higher miracle than that wrought upon Bartimeus will be performed upon us; and what this world under the bright sunshine was to him when his eyes were couched of their films, and he saw the glory of nature for the first time, this in a far grander form will be the heavenly world that shall burst upon our purified vision, and we shall see the glorious form of Jesus in the light in which He dwells. We shall see Him as He is, and we shall be changed into the same image. Surely it is worth casting away the garment of the body; surely what things are gain to us in this world we may well count loss, to have such a revelation and experience as that!—*H. Macmillan, D.D.*



Ver. 52. "*Thy faith hath made thee whole.*"—Ask for this faith, if you have it not. Exercise it if you have it. It is the appropriator of every blessing; it is the hand which lays hold of every blessing, yea, which puts on Christ Himself. Grace stands, so to speak, above us, holding out the mantle of blessedness; faith raises its hand, takes the mantle, and puts it on. Poor, blind, naked, ignorant, wretched, as we may be, yet come we in faith, come we in tears, in penitence, in deep contrition, and yet in faith to the Friend of penitents; and there is not a stain we lament which shall not be wiped out, nor a heart-wound which shall not be healed.

*Following Jesus.*—So with us, when our eyes are opened we follow Jesus in the way. Before that we walk in our own way, in the way of the world; we follow the multitude to do evil, we follow our own sinful lusts and passions;

we choose our own way instead of God's way; we prefer the path which is most pleasant, most easy, most profitable; but when our eyes are opened all is changed, we learn to say, "I loved to choose and see my path; but now—lead Thou me on." Thus we come to follow Jesus in the way; and that way is the way of holiness, the narrow way which leads to life. It is not always a smooth way; it climbs up the Hill Difficulty, and anon winds down into the Valley of Humiliation; it passes through a garden of Gethsemane, a place of agonised prayer; it leads to a cross, a lifelong cross sometimes; it carries us to a grave, but, thank God, a grave from which the stone is rolled away, and which is bright with the light of a glorious resurrection. And withal it is a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace, of peace such as the world cannot give, and it ends in heaven.

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1. "*As He was wont.*"—Wondrously expressive words. Like a tiny straw, they shew the steady movement of a mighty current. Constancy is there, never-failing and inseparably allied to the good. Christ's whole being was but one great undivided habit of holiness. We have to "*grow up unto Him in all things.*" In this upward growth we are forming habits which make for righteousness and holiness with increasing certainty. They have a mutual influence. Habits make acts surer. Acts confirm habit. Our Christlikeness is not to be measured by the goodness of a particular act; neither by that of a series fitfully performed. It is rather to be gauged by such a steady trend of spirit and deed toward all goodness as will lead men abidingly to expect and confidently to affirm that we are acting thus and so wherever we are. A young man was leaving for a distant part of the country. A friend in bidding him good-bye remarked, "We need not tell you to work for God wherever your lot may be. We know you will." A mother was being told of a certain notable example of resistance to temptation on the part of a young officer in the army. While expressing her admiration thereat, she was informed that he who thus nobly lived was her boy. Amid grateful tears she ex-

claimed, "Is that my boy? Is that my Will? It's just like him. I knew he would do so—as he was wont."

Ver. 8. "*They twain shall be one flesh.*"—The parting of man and wife in the sight of God is like the rending of limb from limb. Imagine some dungeon: the smoking torch gives a fitful flame; the air is foul; the prisoner is brought. Tie his feet and hands; stretch him on the rack. Turn your wheels, ye unfeeling executioners, until the great beads stand on his forehead, until the eyeballs seem ready to start from their sockets; turn them; what matter though he yell and scream; turn them; turn them till the cracking bones and quivering sinews can hold no longer! Turn them till limb from limb the poor, quivering, feeling mass settles still in death. Horrible! Yet it is only rending "one flesh." That ghastly, terrible, soul-revolting tragedy is a parable. It, in the physical world, is like divorce in the spiritual. Some sickening accident, when groans and shrieks and cries tell of anguish, shadows forth for us what divorce is like in God's sight. God's Word thus likens divorce and murder—murder cruel and barbarous.

Ver. 14. *Brought to Christ in childhood.*—

Many of the ablest and noblest of Christian teachers were brought to the Saviour in childhood. The martyr Polycarp was only nine years old when he gave himself to Christ. Matthew Henry and Isaac Watts were no older. Archbishop Fénelon was a mere child when his heart awoke to the love of God; William Channing could not remember the time when he first turned to Christ; Robert Hall was a sincere Christian when eleven years old, and became a student for the ministry when but fourteen. Baxter was only a child when he sought the Saviour; Jonathan Edwards sat at the feet of Jesus, Coleridge Patteson was devout and prayerful, Fletcher of Madeley "began to feel the love of God shed abroad in his heart"—each at seven years of age. Frederick W. Robertson became a decided and courageous soldier of Christ in boyhood; Thomas J. Comber, the heroic pioneer of the Congo, gave his heart to Jesus and devoted himself to mission work ere he was thirteen; and John Foster was not fourteen when he found peace with God in Christ Jesus our Lord. It would be easy to enlarge the list; but surely enough has been said to encourage us to lead the children to *immediate* decision for Christ. Let us seek to enrol them *now*. Let us encourage them to come, *with their toys in their hands*, to be blessed by Christ. The kingdom of heaven, which is open to publicans and sinners, is not closed to the little ones He loves.

Ver. 15. *Total renunciation*.—A high-caste Brahmin came to receive holy baptism. He approached the font wearing the sacred thread which, among his Hindoo co-religionists, was the badge of his belonging to the "twice born," and entitled him to little short of religious worship from those of a lower caste. But at the moment when he answered, "I renounce them all," he stripped off the sign of idolatrous pre-eminence and trampled it under his feet.

Ver. 16. *Blessed by the good*.—Says Dr. Samuel Cox: "When I was a boy, I was taken into my father's library to be 'blessed' by those two great missionaries John Williams and William Knibb; and to this moment I remember how proud and happy it made me to have their hands laid on my head, and to hear the kind words they said. It made me feel very 'good,' at least for a little while; and I think that somehow, though I don't at all know how that should be, I am the better for it to this day."

"*He loved little children*."—An earnest and successful minister of the gospel who died a few years ago was possessed of a

beautiful ambition. Expressed in words at fitting times, it had also constant expression in his life. This is what he often said: "I should like my epitaph to be, 'He loved little children, and tried to do them good.'" This single sentence sheds a flood of light on the character of the man who uttered it. Our loves determine what we are. Little children belong to the heavenly kingdom, and are therefore in the Lord's love. A real love for little children, then, denotes a love for heavenly things. A real love is not simply a fondness for bright, pretty ways and winning graces, but a love that takes in childhood as a whole, that can bear patiently with perversity and naughtiness, that forgets self in love for the child and in desire to bring it to the best and highest place possible. A real love for children leads to just such an ambition as possessed this servant of the Lord, "who tried to do them good."

*Care for children*.—A lady missionary in the East tells that one day a woman came to her with a baby, whom she had found in a ditch. The poor child had been cast out by its own father—as thousands of others in heathen countries have been—because it was "only a girl." In begging the lady to take charge of the very unattractive object that was presented to her (it was naked and covered with mud), the woman said, "Please do take this little thing; your God is the only God that teaches to be good to little children."

Ver. 19. *A classical parallel*.—The resemblance which a passage of Menander, in Hirculus, bears to the Scriptural commandments, is remarkable, and is certainly not to be ascribed to imitation, but to the breadth, compass, and universality of the thought, as well as the home appeal they make to the moral sense and our general nature. "If any one, O Pamphilus, think that by merely offering a sacrifice he can arrive at the favour of God, he has an unworthy opinion of Him, and will find himself mistaken. He must become a man of virtue, beneficial to society; must not pollute virgins, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor murder; and the wife, house, horse, youths, and maids of another he must not covet. Sacrifice therefore to God with justice and benevolence; let your purity be in your hearts rather than in your garments."

Ver. 21. *Altogether wrong*.—The rich young ruler came to hear what little decorations might now be added to the superstructure that he has laboriously built, and he is made to feel that he is wrong to the foundation. He is in the position of a man who comes to his medical adviser complaining of a slight uneasiness which

he supposes a tonic or a change of air may remove, and is told that he has heart disease or cancer. Or he is in the position of a sanguine inventor, who has spent the best years of his life on a machine, and at last puts it into the hands of a practical man merely to get the fittings adjusted and steam applied, and is told that the whole thing is wrong in conception and can never by any possibility be made to work.—*M. Dods, D.D.*

*One error fatal.*—The boy goes through a long sum with great accuracy and despatch, but one mistake in the first line makes his whole calculation useless. It only takes one disease to kill a man. His brain may be sound, his lungs untouched, all his organs but one may be in a healthy condition; but if one vital organ be attacked all the other healthy organs will not save him. So it is in character. One vice is sufficient to destroy the whole man.—*Ibid.*

*"One thing" may keep a soul from eternal life.*—But is it right to make such destinies turn upon a single point? That depends on the point. In other relations one thing may bring ruin. At a crisis in worldly interests, one wrong step may lead to remediless disaster. One error in trade may make you bankrupt; one medicine in sickness may give the turn to your life; for the lack of one anchor a vessel is lost. In religion, how may "one thing" keep a soul from heaven? If there is a determined, persistent unwillingness to be saved, that would seem sufficient, would it not? Well, that is the "one thing" referred to by Christ. And, furthermore, it is some "one thing" which makes the unwillingness. The ruler loved his great possessions more than he loved his soul. But the "one thing" may take many forms. It may be one appetite, one ambition, one companionship, one pleasure. Every one is called to choose between one set of influences that helps religion and some other set which hinders. He cannot bend in both directions.

*One thing needful.*—One jewel only was needed to complete the circlet; one link only to perfect the chain; one step only to touch the goal; one movement only, and the beautiful gate opens into the temple of God. But the one thing lacking may be of all others the most essential—the one thing needful. He who is dying of thirst lacks only a cup of cold water; he who is perishing of hunger lacks only a morsel of bread. A corp-e lacks only life.

*The broken bridge.*—Hossein said to his aged grandfather Abbas, "Oh, grandfather, why are you reading the gospel?" Abbas made answer, "I read it, oh, my son, to find the way to heaven!" Hossein, who had received some instruction in an English school, smiling, said, "The way is plain enough; worship but the one true God, and keep the commandments." The man,

whose hair was silver with age, replied, "Hossein, the commandments of God are as a bridge of ten arches, by means of which the soul might once have passed to heaven. But, alas! the bridge has been broken. There is not one among us who has not broken the commands again and again." "My conscience is clear," cried Hossein proudly; "I have kept all the commandments—at least, almost all," he added, for he felt that he had said too much. "And if one arch of the bridge give way under the traveller, doth he not surely perish in the flood, though the nine other arches be firm and strong?"

*False and true power.*—I once asked a rich man, says an American writer, by what motive he had been prompted in accumulating his wealth. "Power," said he, "power"; and then, clenching his hands and teeth and contracting all his muscles to their highest tension, he added, "I wanted power, and I have got it." "Yes," said I; "you have power over any quantity of water or steam, and over any number of wheels. You have power too over the bodies of certain classes of men; but do good with your wealth, and you will become a ruler over all men's hearts; nor will your reign cease when you die, but will last as long as you are remembered; and the love of men will not suffer your memory to perish."

*Amiability among the worldly.*—Father Taylor being once asked if a certain relative of his had been converted, replied, "No! he is not a saint, but he is a very sweet sinner!"

Ver. 22. *Away from Jesus.*—He went away; he went away sorrowing—sorrowing to go, and yet he went. It is like what you may see sometimes when you wander in the night-time by the side of some sleeping sea. You may see the path of the moonbeam bright and silvery upon the darkened water. You may see some ship pass out of the darkness into that pathway of the moonlight; and as the light falls upon it, every sail, every spar, almost every rope, gleams in the moonshine, and you may then see it pass out of that path into the night which hides it evermore from our view. Is not this the history of this soul, passing for a moment under this light from the face of Jesus, but passing sorrowing from it into the darkness of an endless night—the very sorrow shewing that he knew what a sacrifice he was making, sorrowing because he knew that he was leaving Jesus, sorrowing because he did not wish to leave Him, sorrowing because if he could only have had the world with Him he would have had Him, but sorrowing because he could not give up the world that he might have Him, sorrowing the sorrow of the world which worketh death?



*Looking back after insight.*—One hour of supreme insight, one hour of clear, surpassing vision, and life is never the same again, and cannot be the same again. A man who has dwelt from his childhood without passing beyond the mountainous bounds of the valley in which he was born, who sees only so much of God's work as lies within the mountain-range, who has judged man and judged God by the little life of that little plain, can be happy, and in a sense can be large. But once let him climb one of those mountain-crests, let him see the undulating plains of Life stretching away to the distant horizon, let him feel the larger argument of God's Spirit, and understand that God is not conditioned and determined by a few families in a little plain, and he cannot go back and be as happy and as strong as he was. This youth was in such a plight. The old life of piety and benevolence had been sufficient in its time; it gave him as large an environment as his soul desired or could conceive of, and in the perfect harmony of himself and his environment he was happy and strong. But Christ had just lifted him to a new height, had shewn him a nobler heritage, had touched his soul and brought it for a moment up to the high pitch of real Christlike heroism. And the young man saw, but felt he had not courage to cut his old moorings and take the new inheritance, and so, as he looked back, the vision he had seen belittled and shadowed his past inheritance. There was the cause of his sadness; he was not ready to go on, and there was nothing to go back to except a squeezed and exhausted past.—*C. A. Berry.*

*The Hamlet of the New Testament.*—What was it that drove Hamlet mad? It seems to me his madness arose out of the breach between his perceptions and his aptitudes, between his enlarged and haunting sense of duty and his faltering ability to face and fulfil it. Hamlet could have been happy under any one of three conditions,—had he never been forced out of the quiet retreat of a simple and placid life; or, being so forced, had he possessed a rougher nature, not sensitive to moral appeal, seared and hardened by coarse contact with the world; or, having a healthy conscience and recognising sacred obligations, had he boldly obeyed the vision which called to duty. It was because he saw and felt more than he had nerve to execute that a discord arose which destroyed the symmetry and sanity or his mind. And so it was with this youth.—*Ibid.*

Vers. 23-27. *The peril of property.*—No wonder that Anthony, the father of monasticism in Egypt, went out from the church in Thebes where this passage had been read, to give away his ancestral estates, to put his sister into the fellowship and care of pious

virgins, and to go himself poor and alone into the solitude of the cliffs! No wonder that in the early centuries the vow of poverty became the threshold article of every Christian life, and, with its twin principle of celibacy, became the foundation of the great monastic orders in the Church! But surely a rich man can be a Christian, and a poor man may be a sinner! For a ragged coat and a diamond ring have no moral quality or spiritual character in themselves. Ah, no! It is not money, but the love of it, that keeps men out of the Father's house. And so, as we strike the bell or fire the gun to arouse the sleeping village, or dash cold water in the face of the fainting, the Son of God would bestir men to the possibilities of peril which lurk in the possession of property.

*Covetous to the last.*—We read not long ago the experience of an English clergyman called to the death-bed of a wealthy parishioner. As he knelt at his bedside, his pastor twice requested him to take his hand as he prayed for his upholding in that solemn hour; but the dying man declined to give it. After the end had come, and they had turned down the coverlet, his rigid hands were found holding the safe-key in their death-grip. No hand of fellowship for his minister, because he could not loose his hold upon the key to the safe-vault! The power of hands which hold in their palms such possibilities of help and service is beyond our arithmetic to compute. The peril, here and hereafter, which waits upon the misuse of such a power is infinite.

*Impedimenta.*—Lord Bacon, who was a prince of modern worldly philosophers, and who never spoke merely from a spiritual plane in his treatment of practical themes of thought, says emphatically: "I cannot call riches better than the baggage of virtue. The Roman word is better, *impedimenta*; for as the baggage is to an army, so is riches to virtue: it cannot be spared, nor left behind, but it hindereth the march; yea, and the care of it sometimes loseth or disturbeth the victory." Then, in commenting on the suggestion that riches will enable men to purchase themselves successes, Bacon adds that "certainly great riches have sold more men than they have bought out."

*The weight of riches.*—An opulent merchant having received a sum of money, was putting the ducats one by one into a pair of scales, in order to ascertain that they were not too light. "For my part," said Gotthold, who was present, "I should be more afraid of their being too heavy." "How so?" inquired the merchant. "Do you not think," rejoined Gotthold, "that money is too heavy when bedewed with the blood of the poor, the sweat of the laborious, and the tears of the widow and the orphan, or when loaded with the curses of those who, by fraud or violence,

have been robbed of it. I will hope, however, that there are no pieces of this description in that heap of yours, or rather I will not fear that there are any. Suffer me, however, without offence, to express the wish that you will always make your conscience your scales, and weigh in it your dollars and ducats to ascertain that they are of proper weight, and have been honestly acquired. Many a man never learns, until he is struggling with death, how difficult, or rather impossible, it is to force a soul burdened with unrighteous gain through the strait gate which leadeth unto life. Take heed, then, that no such gain ever burdens yours. The more he carries, the more the pilgrim sweats and pants as he climbs the steep; and the more the conscience is oppressed with dishonesty and fraud, the harder will the struggle of a death-bed be."

Ver. 23. *The giver of wealth forgotten.*—Among the legends of Hindostan is one that illustrates these words of our Saviour. One Rawana, a Brahmin, was offered by his god anything that he might name. Rawana prayed his god to bestow upon him the government of the world. His god immediately granted his wish. Then he prayed for ten heads, with which to see and rule the world. After Rawana had well fortified himself, and was surrounded by riches, honours, and praise, he forgot his god Ixora, and bade all the people worship him, an act which greatly angered the god Ixora, and he destroyed Rawana. How true to human nature was the course of Rawana! And how many we find to-day that have forgotten the God that gave them all they possess!

Ver. 24. *Peril of riches.*—When Alexander the Great sent a rich present to Phocian the Athenian, the latter asked why he had been the object of so splendid a gift. On hearing that it was because the king considered him the most virtuous man in Athens, he replied, "If he wishes me to preserve my virtue, let him keep his riches," and forthwith sent back the present to Alexander.

*Hard to leave.*—When Garrick shewed Dr. Johnson his fine house, gardens, statues, pictures, etc., at Hampton Court, what ideas did they awaken in the mind of that great man? Instead of a flattering compliment, which was expected, "Ah! David, David," said the doctor, "these are the things which make a death-bed terrible!"

Ver. 25. *Rich men like camels.*—It were no bad comparison to liken mere rich men to camels and mules; for they often pursue their devious way over hills and mountains, laden with Indian purple, with gems, aromas, and generous wines upon their

backs, attended, too, by a long line of servants as a safeguard on their way. Soon, however, they come to their evening halting-place, and forthwith their precious burdens are taken from their backs; and they, now wearied and stripped of their lading and their retinue of slaves, shew nothing but livid marks of stripes. So, also, those who glitter in gold and purple raiment, when the evening of life comes rushing on them, have naught to shew but marks and wounds of sin impressed upon them by their evil use of riches.—*St. Augustine.*

Ver. 27. *All things possible to God.*—I was pacing to and fro, awaiting a train within a railway station. There were others in the great room, and it was singular none of them had observed it before—a sparrow imprisoned within the sliding window sashes. He had thought he saw a way, but it was a glass wall. He had beaten his wings to tatters, and his fair plumage into rags. The glass was opaque with the stains of his denuded cuticle, and streaked with blood. He may have been in this crystal dungeon for hours, and fighting till he sank into quiet from exhaustion, from which reviving again to fight as when I first heard him. Could I be denied it, as I sprang to that heavy frame and sent it with a bang to the ceiling, letting the oppressed go free? Does not Christ, the Sent to open prison doors, feel a grander propulsion to liberate unhappy men, who thought they saw a way, but found themselves in dreadful bonds of poverty, or pain, or dishonour, or conscious sin? Suppose the sparrow had piped out to me, in shrill treble, that he wanted no mercy, but justice; that he could conduct his own life; that he scorned to be beholden unto any one. It is an analogue of many human souls, who are whipping their wings to shreds against the impossible, while to God all things are possible, even their setting free.—*E. J. Haynes.*

Ver. 28. *Choosing Christ.*—The poet George Herbert was so highly connected, and in such favour at court, that at one time a secretaryship of state seemed to him not unattainable. But he gave up all such prospects for the work of a humble clergyman, and in looking back upon the time when he made his choice, he could say: "I think myself more happy than if I had attained what then I so ambitiously thirsted for. And I can now behold the court with an impartial eye, and see plainly that it is made up of frauds and bitters and flattery, and many other such empty, imaginary, and painted pleasures—pleasures which are so empty as not to satisfy when they are enjoyed. But in God and His service is a fulness of all joy and pleasure, and no satiety."

Ver. 29. "*For My sake.*"—George Müller, the founder of the Ashley Down Orphanage, once said that more than £800,000 had been given him towards the support of more than eight thousand orphans—a work of which a sceptic once remarked that it came nearer proving the truth of Christianity than anything he had ever seen before. But the history of it all may be written in three words—"For My sake." And how many hospitals too have been built because Christ healed the sick! You may grave "*For My sake*" on a good many of the foundation stones. Again, Christian people are found to live and work in the East End of London—Christian people who have the means to live in comfort and luxury elsewhere, but who choose to live where they do in order that they may "rescue the perishing and care for the dying." Why? "*For My sake.*" How is it that loving hands all over England are willing to sew and make garments in order that the gospel may reach the zenanas of India? Here again (and the list might be multiplied indefinitely) it is done "*For My sake.*" Young men of wealth or talent forsake home and friends and all in order to preach Jesus Christ in India, China, Japan, or Africa. Henry Martyn leaves his books, David Livingstone his loom, Mackay the engineering shed, Charles Studd the bar, and Stanley Smith fresh from the University crew—all these and myriads more of whom the world is not worthy have gone forth for life or death, and here again the only explanation is, "*For My sake.*"

Vers. 32-34. *Will-power.*—There is nothing to be done in life without an inflexible will. "To be weak is to be miserable, doing or suffering." And our Master has set us the example of this, that unless there run through a man's life, like the iron framework on the top of the spire of Antwerp Cathedral, on which graceful fancies are strung in stone, unless there run through a man's life the rigid bar of an iron purpose that nothing can bend, the life will be naught and the man will be a failure. Christ is the pattern of heroic endurance, and reads to us the lesson, *resist and persist*, whatever stands between us and our goal.—A. MacLaren, D.D.

*Invincible courage.*—It was as if, in the old days, some excommunicated man with the decree of the Inquisition pronounced against him had gone into Rome and planted himself in the front of the piazza before the buildings of the Holy Office, and lifted up his testimony there.—*Ibid.*

*The way of the Cross.*—An old ecclesiastical legend tells how an emperor won the true Cross in battle from a pagan king, and brought it back, with great pomp, to Jerusalem, but found the gate walled up,

and an angel standing before it, who said, "Thou bringest back the Cross with pomp and splendour; He that died upon it had shame for His companion; and carried it on His back, barefooted, to Calvary." Then, says the chronicler, the emperor dismounted from his steed, cast off his robes, lifted the sacred Rood on his shoulders, and with bare feet advanced to the gate, which opened of itself, and he entered in. We have to go up the steep rocky road that leads from the plain where the Dead Sea is to Jerusalem. Let us follow the Master, as He strides before us, the Forerunner and the Captain of our salvation.—*Ibid.*

*Stern resolution in face of danger.*—With unshaken resolution Jesus pressed forward to receive the crown of thorns, and to pass through the terrible crisis that awaited Him. We may remember, by way of illustration, the words of Julius Caesar, when he embarked in a raging storm to obtain the sooner aid for the famine-stricken people of Rome: "It is necessary that I should go, but it is not necessary that I should live!" Thus a brave man is inspired by the circumstances, and supported by the enthusiasm of those around; but in our Lord's case, in the solitariness of His mysterious life, He "treads the winepress alone."

*The loneliness of the great.*—Great men, as a rule, are not club men. The thinkers of the world have not been society fractions. In their isolation they remind us of the oak, which is never seen in a crowd, forming what may be properly termed a wood. An oak forest is nothing more than a poetical figure; for the oak stands alone, or mingled with other trees of different foliage, which it dominates with venerable feudal sovereignty. We have one Dr. Johnson and a number of Boswells round about him.

Ver. 38. *Ambition.*—A boy at play hit a ball so that it fell on the roof of a high barn. He climbed up the rugged door, and, clinging by a hole in the brickwork, reached the top of the barn, rubbing off the skin from his fingers, tearing his clothes, and running great risk of breaking his neck. He gained the ball; but was it worth climbing for?

Ver. 39. *Use of suffering.*—In the manufacture of paper the filthy rags are torn to pieces, reduced to pulp, bleached and washed till it is white as snow, then shaken to and fro till fibre crosses fibre and gives firmness to the sheet, and ironed by hot cylinders till made smooth and even. Such is the effect of tribulation.

Ver. 44. *Life as service.*—Confucius being asked if he could in one word express the whole duty of life, said, "Will not the word *serve* do?"



Ver. 45. *The law of service.*—

Not to be served, O Lord, but to serve man  
All that I can,  
And as I minister unto his need,  
Serve Thee indeed;  
So runs the law of love that hath been given  
To make earth heaven.  
What if the task appointed me be mean!  
Wert Thou not seen  
To gird Thee with the towel, as was meet,  
To wash the feet  
Of Thy disciples, whom Thou wouldst be-  
friend  
Until the end?  
For meanest work becomes the noblest part,  
When a great heart,  
Pitiful, stoops to comfort our distress,  
Or to impress  
A sealing kiss on penitence fresh clad  
In raiment sad.  
And if the wanderer's feet be soiled and sore,  
So much the more  
He needs a tender hand to cleanse and heal,  
And make him feel  
There is no task that love will shrink to do  
Life to renew.

*Walter C. Smith, D.D.*

*A throne for the ministering Christ.*—The other day I sat in St. Paul's, and by my left was Nelson's monument. Why was that monument erected? Nelson told his men that England expected every man to do his duty, and he did what he felt was his duty. And because he served his country, his country honours his memory. I have in my heart a throne, and on that throne—Christ. Why? Because He came to minister, and has ministered to me.—*A. Scott.*

Ver. 46. *The blind beggar and the multitude.*—Origen gives a very pretty allegorical turn to this narrative. He makes the blind man, who calls on Jesus, an Ebionite; and the multitudes around, who commanded him to hold his peace, believers from among the heathen converts, who generally held the more exalted views in regard to the Passion of the Messiah; and then he continues thus: But although the multitudes commanded him to be silent, yet he said the more because he believed in Jesus, although his faith was of a human kind; and he cried out aloud, and said to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" How different would many things have been if men, in this spirit of love and freedom, had always allowed the grace of the Redeemer to fall on all who call upon Him! if they had always taken into account the various stages in the Christian progress up to the ripeness of manhood in the faith, and had not wished to force different spirits all at once into the same measure and degrees!

*Treatment of the poor.*—The Jews had a law that there should be no beggar in

Israel. England has statutes also to correct impudent poor and to provide for impotent poor; but, as it is observed, our laws have a better prologue than epilogue; they be well penned, but ill kept; and so this good order is neglected among us, as it was about Jericho, to the great scandal of Christian religion and dishonour of our English nation. It is written of the Athenians that they punished idle persons as heinous offenders. And the Egyptians had a law that every man should bring his name to the chief ruler of the province and show what trade he followed. The Romans enacted severe statutes against such as negligently left their ground untillied. Among the Chinese every man is set about somewhat, according to his strength and years; one labours with his hand, another with his foot, etc.; and (which is most admirable) they keep in Canton four thousand blind men, unfit for other service, to grind corn and rice for the people. If either the law were believed as gospel, or the gospel kept as law, such as would not labour should not eat. Loiterers and sturdy rogues should be sent to prison, or some place where they might work well; and as for such as cannot labour, it is fit, we that are strong, should help to bear the burdens of the weak, being eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.—*Dean Boys.*

Ver. 47. *Soul sight.*—One day a cry went down the street, every one fled, as a runaway horse came tearing along the road. A little blind girl, left all alone, stood in the road, not knowing which way to turn to escape from death. She could not see, and no human hand was there to guide. She did not try to run, but sinking down on her knees just where she was, with upturned face to the heaven the bodily eye could not see, she commended herself to the Father of all. The horse dashed on—it was upon her! It swerved and thundered past, leaving the lonely kneeling child unhurt. That little one's bodily eye could not see, but the soul eye, looking out beyond all, saw the Maker and Creator of all. So sometimes blind folk see more than those who think they see.

Ver. 50. "*And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.*"—I remember once reading these words on a memorial tablet in a country church. Inscriptions on tombstones are often unsatisfactory, and Scriptural quotations upon them most inappropriate; but this one was as suitable as it was singular. The squire of the village had late in life come under the influence of Christian friends, who brought him to a knowledge of the gospel; and to him the words of the Evangelist were applied. They were very suggestive. They told of pride, and worldly pursuits, and self-righteousness,

of all to which the man had clung for a lifetime, cast away that he might come to the Saviour. For a sinner saved in life's last hours a better epitaph could hardly have been chosen. I admired the piety that compared the rich man lying there to the poor blind beggar of the gospel story, the once highly esteemed garment of personal righteousness to the beggar's worthless robe, and that expressed the one hope and refuge of the soul in Christ by the words "he came to Jesus." It reminded me of the lines on William Carey's tomb:

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Thy kind arms I fall;

Be Thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all."

*What is your want?*—We complain of wandering thoughts; we kneel at our devotions, and our thoughts go fluttering away from us like the sparrows that fit and twitter in the trees. The remedy for this is to have a want. Let us pause at the threshold of prayer as Jeanie Deans did at the door of the audience-room, laying her hand upon her heart. Let us, if we would present a petition at the throne of heavenly grace, feel the parchment to make sure it is there.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

It may be well to trace out, approximately, the order of events here. Leaving Jericho on the Friday morning, after a fatiguing journey of six or seven hours, they reach Bethany, where they spend the Sabbath. On Saturday evening Christ sups in the house of Simon the leper, His disciples and Lazarus and his sisters being present; and at this feast He is anointed by Mary. During that night the chief priests—irritated on hearing that many of the Jews have been to see Jesus and Lazarus—hold a meeting to consult as to the advisability of putting them both to death. Next morning—Palm Sunday—the triumphal entry into Jerusalem takes place.

Ver. 1. **Bethphage and Bethany.**—Bethphage ("House-of-unripe-figs") being mentioned first both here and in Luke xix. 29, would seem to indicate that it lay on the road from Jericho to the east of Bethany ("House-of-dates"); but the traditional site is to the west. Porter surmises that the two names may have been applied to different quarters of the one straggling village, the one part called Bethphage from the fig orchards adjoining it, and the other Bethany from its palm trees. See his *Syria and Palestine*, p. 180. **At the mount of Olives.**—*Looking towards*—*πρός*.

Ver. 3. **And straightway he will send him hither.**—The insertion of *πάλιν* before *ἔδει* in *Σ*, *B*, *C*, *D*, *L*, *Δ*, has led many to regard this clause as a part of the answer which the disciples were to give if any difficulty arose as to the borrowing of the colt. But Dr. F. Field urges in defence of the generally received interpretation: (1) that *εὐθὺς* is far more properly said of the promptness of the owners in giving up the colt than of the expedition of the borrower in returning, which could only take place after a certain interval of time; and (2) that the effect of the authoritative requisition, "The Lord hath need of him," upon the mind of the owners would be weakened rather than strengthened by the addition, "and will be sure to return him."

Ver. 4. A very circumstantial account, such as none but an eyewitness would have thought of giving—a strong indication that Peter was one of the two disciples. *They found the colt tied beside the door, outside (the yard or court), on the roundabout road (i.e. the road that went round the house).*

Ver. 8. **Branches . . . the way.**—See *R.V.*

Vers. 9, 10. See *R.V.*

Ver. 13. **If haply.**—*If, after all*—although not the proper time for fruit.

Ver. 17. The marginal rendering is preferable.

Ver. 19. See *R.V.*

Vers. 23, 24. See *R.V.*

Ver. 26. *MS.* authority for retention or omission is about equally divided.

Ver. 27. **The elders.**—"The ancient senators or representatives of the people. With the chief priests and scribes they constituted on this occasion a formal deputation from the

Sanhedrin. We find the earliest notice of *the elders* acting in concert as a political body in the time of the Exodus (Exod. xix. 7; Deut. xxxi. 9). Their authority, which extended to all matters of the common weal, they exercised under (*a*) the Judges (Judg. ii. 17; 1 Sam. iv. 3); under (*b*) the Kings (1 Sam. xxx. 26; 1 Chron. xxi. 16; 2 Sam. xvii. 4); during (*c*) the Captivity (Jer. xxix. 1; Ezek. viii. 1); after (*d*) the Return (Ezra v. 5, vi. 7, 14, x. 8, 14); under (*e*) the Maccabees (1 Macc. xii. 6; 2 Macc. i. 10); in (*f*) the time of our Lord, when they denoted a distinct body in the Sanhedrin, amongst whom they obtained their seat by election, or nomination from the executive authority."

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—11.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxi. 1-11, 14-17; LUKE xix. 29-44; JOHN xii. 12-19.)

*The final entry into Jerusalem.*—I. Here was a token which Jesus gave to these two disciples, and to the twelve by them.—It was an example of His superhuman knowledge. A similar case occurred in the preparation for the Paschal Supper (Luke xxii. 10). These manifestations of supernatural knowledge, though less illustrious than His publicly wrought miracles, were of the same general order. And they were of great interest as tokens given by our Lord to individual disciples. In the present instance we are not told who these two disciples were. Our Lord appointed at His pleasure when He was on earth, and He does so now that He is in heaven, those of His servants who shall do special work and receive special manifestations from Himself in the discharge of it. Multitudes saw the greater, or at least the more conspicuous, miracles; but these two disciples had this at first all to themselves. And thus it often is still in the Christian life. In addition to all the more patent evidences of the Divine reality of the Gospel, there will be manifestations, arising out of personal transactions with God and the Redeemer, which are gloriously confirming to faith and hope; bright beamings of truth from the Word on the mind; a realised nearness of access into the Divine presence; marked answers to prayer of Providence; spiritual results following upon efforts for others and endeavours for the Divine glory; and suchlike experimental evidences, things full of emphasis to the soul which meets with them—still quiet voices, which those who are near the Master sometimes hear!

II. An interesting case of the fulfilment of prophecy is presented to us here.—Nearly five hundred years before it had been written by Zechariah the prophet (ix. 9). The disciples of our Lord themselves, we are informed by St. John (xii. 16), did not at the time think of this prediction, or view what was occurring as the fulfilling of it; but "when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done such things unto Him." And thus it is that events best explain the prophetic Word. We have, like the disciples, to "company with" Christ, and stand by the interests of His kingdom, whatever measure of development they may have attained, working, watching, and praying, and that measure will assuredly go on to increase till the world shall be bright with Messiah's glory. The fulfilment of prophecy in the case before us strikingly confirms our believing expectations of the future. For this prediction, as it stands in Zechariah, is directly connected with references to the ultimate triumphs of the Saviour. And certainly as the former part of the prediction was accomplished, so certainly "His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth."

III. An illustration is here furnished of the control of Christ over minds and events, and of the manner in which, when the time for the execution of the Divine purposes is come, the means and agencies at once appear.—Jesus was to make a public entry into Jerusalem. It must needs be so, that



Scripture might be fulfilled. And see how all things conspire for this end. Our Lord sends into the village over against Him and near the city, knowing precisely where the animal He was to ride on would be found; and there it was at the very hour at which it was needed, as though waiting for the honour now to be put upon it, *after having been spoken of in prophecy five hundred years before!* But will it be given up for the purpose? Yes. The owners have only to be told that the Great Teacher had need of it, and it was at once placed at His disposal. Have we not here a specimen of what may be looked for in the future unfolding of the purposes of Heaven? As the periods come for the successive fulfilment of God's designs in connexion with the kingdom of His Son, the fitting means and instrumentalities will not be wanting. Who can foresee, moreover, what events in Providence may arise to impress men's minds, as the raising of Lazarus did at this time, both to facilitate the diffusion of the gospel, and to awaken, by the accompanying power of the Spirit of God, a sense of the need of the blessings it offers? One may well be awed in viewing the progress of events, even in our own day,—in the consolidation, to a great extent, of religious liberty in our own land, and in many of those of the Continent; in the opening of India and China to the preaching of Christ; in the triumphs of the gospel in Madagascar, long the scene of bloody persecution; in the advance of evangelisation in Burmah, Polynesia, Africa, and other parts of the field of missions; in the unbarring of Italy, in which the Reformation was once crushed by persecution, and to which till lately there was no access through its length and breadth to free Christian exertion. Everywhere a multitude of obstacles have yet to be overcome; but all things are pointing onward to great and grand issues in the not very distant future.

IV. The joyous acclamations of the disciples as they attended their Master into Jerusalem may well remind us of what should be the attitude and feeling of the Church of Christ with reference to the triumphs of its Lord.—No doubt there were many voices raised that day under the influence of mere passing excitement. But it was not so with the real disciples with whom the demonstration probably originated. Even they had then no enlarged acquaintance with the truth of Christ; but they had that which is the rudiment of all preparation for Christian service, sacrifice, and suffering—a loving devotedness to their Lord. And He approved and encouraged their ardour. Amid all the occupations of earth, and all the distractions of time, what a psalm of praise to the exalted Saviour should the Christian life of a redeemed sinner be!—*E. T. Prust.*

*An Advent Sunday discourse.*—The history of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem is selected as the Holy Gospel for Advent Sunday, because it is typical of the manner in which He makes His Advent throughout the centuries to the Church at large.

I. It is the same Person who comes, and in the same character—Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God.—His very name should ensure Him a welcome in every heart. He is "Jesus"—our Saviour; and "Christ"—the Anointed of God: anointed as Prophet, to teach the way of God in truth; anointed as Priest, to make atonement for our sins, and by one offering to perfect for ever them that are sanctified; anointed as King, to set up His throne in our hearts, and reduce every thought and affection to the obedience of faith. Thus has He *ever* presented Himself to the reception of every individual who is acquainted with what is written in the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Him, whether Jews then or Christians since. Any difference there may be is clearly in *our* favour. Those who hailed Him as the Son of David, and rent the air with hosannas to Him that came in the name of the Lord, had after

all very low, imperfect, and even false ideas of His character and mission. Their thoughts all ran upon carnal enemies and temporal deliverances. We know better than that; we have learnt that the most cruel tyrants are Satan and Sin, and that a man's worst foes are of his own household, even within his own breast. Knowing our danger and weakness, we are the better able to appreciate the greatness of our deliverance, and to hail with joy and gratitude Him who comes to "heal the broken-hearted," etc.

II. As it is the same Great Person who comes, so **He comes in a spiritual sense to the same.** Of His First Advent in general it is said, "He came unto *His own*." But especially when, as now, He visited Jerusalem, the city of David who was His father according to the flesh, and the Temple of God which was His Heavenly Father's house, might He be said in a more particular manner to be *coming unto His own*. And is not this the case with the Saviour of mankind, whensoever and to whomsoever He comes? Are we not *doubly* His—His by creation and His by redemption? But we know by experience that the most unquestionable title does not ensure peaceful possession. Thus in the days of His flesh (John i. 10, 11). And still, when He asserts His claim to universal empire, or knocks at the door of the heart of individual sinners, the greater number, like the inhabitants of Jerusalem, are moved only with wonder and surprise at the demand made upon them (Matt. xxi. 10). They ask, "Who is this?"—some, indeed, with an honest desire for information and enlightenment (John ix. 36); but too many in the bad, bold spirit of the Jewish rulers (Matt. xxi. 23).

III. We may see another point of resemblance in **the manner of our Lord's Advent.** *How* did He approach Jerusalem? As a mighty conqueror, at the head of an army, to destroy His enemies and burn up their city? Far different. See Matt. xxi. 5. His attendants a few simple men and feeble women, who had followed Him from His native place. What could be more typical of the Saviour's Mission to this earth? See John iii. 17; Matt. xii. 20. What an irresistible appeal is that of St. Paul! (2 Cor. x. 1). Force is met by force. He who assails with violence is by violence repelled. Against the crash of thunder we stop our ears. But to gentleness we yield. To him who entreats we show ourselves easy to be entreated. The still, small voice is the most certain to gain our attention. Be it so now. Receive with meekness Him who comes in the spirit of meekness. Wait not till He comes in another fashion (Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. i. 7).

IV. Another point of comparison that we may draw relates to **the reception of Christ.** The inhabitants of Jerusalem, not content to await His arrival, went out to meet Him on the road (John xii. 13). Even so the Church, in Advent, goes forth to meet her Lord. His Incarnation, or actual coming in the flesh, she celebrates at Christmas; but long before that time we may imagine her to be standing on the watch-tower, eagerly looking for the signs of His approach. At last, as on this day, she espies Him afar off, and gives notice to all her children—"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." But in another sense the coming of the Son of Man is "not with observation," and not at any particular season. To the heart of the sinner Christ often comes "on a day that he looks not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware"; and so, finding nobody come out to meet Him, He turns round and departs as silently as He came. We must meet Him on the road. We must be in attendance where He is likely to be found. We must wait for Him in the way of His judgments, providences, ordinances. Prayer especially is like a place where roads from all directions meet. Whenever and however He comes, He must pass *that way*; and if we are *there*, waiting for Him, it is impossible for us to miss Him.

V. Those who went to meet Him on His approach to Jerusalem received Him with the most significant tokens of honour and respect (ver. 8).—So let us welcome “Him that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Let us put off the old man with his deeds of darkness, lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and so make a way for the Redeemer to enter and take possession of our souls.

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1-11. *The significance of Christ's royal entry into Jerusalem.*—It is surely a strange mistake, as Dr. Edersheim remarks, to regard this entry as implying that, fired by enthusiasm, Christ for the moment expected the people would receive Him as the Messiah. Nor is it much better to describe it as a concession to the fevered expectations of His disciples and the multitude. It was, on the contrary, an integral part of Christ's Mission, which would not be complete without it. “It behoved Him so to enter Jerusalem, because He was a King; and as King to enter it in such manner, because He was such a King: and both the one and the other were in accordance with the prophecy of old.”

Vers. 2-6. *Humble service.*—1. We should always attempt that for which we have Christ's warrant. 2. We should not attempt that for which we have not Christ's warrant. 3. In looking for that for which we have Christ's warrant, we must expect opposition. From—(1) The weakness of the flesh. (2) The unbelieving amongst men. (3) The spiritual hosts of wickedness. (4) If we attempt that for which we have Christ's warrant, in the manner He directs, we shall accomplish it.—*J. S. Swan.*

*Particularity in giving directions.*—The closer the personal oversight given to one's business the better. But after all is said and done a great part of the work of life depends on delegated labour. Men cannot do everything at first-hand. Neither does God. He has His angels or messengers. They do His bidding. The Holy Spirit is sent to “convince

the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.” But now the fulfilment of the work entrusted to an agent, in harmony with the desire of the sender, will not only depend, under God, on the intelligence and faithfulness of the one sent, but also on the nature of the instructions given by the sender. The less we take for granted in this respect the better. And this the more so in proportion to the deficiencies of the sent. In giving orders Jesus left no room for mistake. His directions were very specific: they were no doubt given clearly; they could be heard distinctly. Because He Himself was perfectly familiar with the requisites of any work, He did not therefore think, or act as if He thought, that a few hurried hints would be sufficient for others. It was said of Christ that He “shall not fail.” He was pre-eminently successful in all He undertook. One of the characteristics that prevented failure was His thoroughness. He did not despise details. Confusion, vexation, failure, were thus avoided. Note His care in telling His disciples where to find the colt, what kind of a colt, in what condition it would be, whether tied or loose, how to answer objections to their bringing him, etc. Then again in regard to the preparation for the Passover the same particularity is observed. The result was that all moved on smoothly. All was in harmony with the injunction, “Let everything be done decently and in order.”—*Wm. M. Campbell.*

Ver. 3. “*The Lord hath need of him.*”—This is the only time in the Bible where the Lord is said to have



need of any creature; and here it is said of a despised creature—of an ass, as if to rebuke the pride of creature superiority, and at the same time to exalt the dignity of creature instrumentality. These words are spoken of an ass, to prevent the possibility of any one saying, “I am too mean to be of any service to so glorious a Master; my abilities are too small, my position is too obscure.” Perhaps at the moment of such a temptation there may be some blessed service for such a one, which, instrumentally speaking, could only be performed by that one. Yes, it may be to bear Jesus in His members to His triumph or His Cross.—*J. T. Baylee, D.D.*

Vers. 5, 6. *1 power of Christ's Word.*—Nothing resists the Word of the God-man, nor the faith and obedience of a faithful disciple. Let us learn to avoid all arguing and disputing whenever God commands us something above our strength, and to put our whole confidence in the power of His will, which can do all things. He accustoms His apostles to see that the wills of men are less in their own power than in that of God, and that His Word is almighty even in the mouth of His ministers, to the end that men may believe them.—*P. Quesnel.*

Vers. 8-10. *How Christ must be entertained.*—1. We must believe Him to be that Great Prophet who is the Messiah and Saviour of the world. 2. We must profess and confess this faith, having “Hosanna” in our mouths, and crying, “Blessed,” etc. 3. We must spread our garments in the way, etc., *i.e.* forsake all and follow Christ, proffering and offering ourselves wholly to His service.—*Dean Boys.*

*The nature of Christ's kingdom.*—A King, not of this world, though over it; ruling, not in external pomp and state, but by secret providence and power; not so much over the bodies and temporal estates, as in the hearts and consciences of men; not chiefly by outward compulsion and violence,

but by inward allurements and persuasion (Rev. v. 13, xix. 16).—*Dr. Isaac Barrow.*

Ver. 11. *The evening can become the sweetest and most sacred portion of the day.* It is profound, it is serene; tender as solemn, tranquil as pensive; full of permission fraught with privilege; free and fresh and fragrant with repose. Evening completes the day, as its coronation and benediction. The morrow is at hand; evening awaits the morrow, as its herald and its pledge. The west horizon claims its kindred with the east, looking so like it that you know them to be twins. The sundown on the west glows like the sunrise on the east. Both alike tip the hill-tops with gold. Pause now and lay down the tool, the spade; there is something else than toil—there is reverie, rest. Glad evenings guarantee and glorify the days, replenish wear and tear, stanch wounds. But when shadows wrap you, when curtains close, birds to their nests, cattle to their stalls, man to his home—soul, whither thou? Whither else but to thy God? Oh, house thee in His peace! Life's eventide evinces much in the soft declensions of late lingering years. The old man's heart sees shadows lengthen and dusk deepen, until familiar spots wear a weird beauty, as the places that knew him begin to know him no more for ever, and the fellowships that used to greet and cheer him seem in their dimness to forget that he was ever young like them or still has his share on the earth. The eventide of life is death, and the evening and the morning make the first day. Nigher now the morning, and death is only eventide at last. Life begins like the light—it comes out of the dark of an oblivion that seems to itself a nonentity, full of pangs to the mother and as full of pain to the infant, if the infant were alike sensitive and sentient. But playful infancy, sportive childhood, take slight notice of the struggle, the transition, and the change. When at length it has reached its close, it settles back to

the same fostering conditions. Death hides it in the oblivion and the shadow once again. And what conclusion can there be but that, as its morning had an evening, its evening is to have a morning too, a fresher, fuller, freer morning next, because as tenderly the Infinite disrobes the life slumber, lulling

it for night hours and cradling it for infantile and ineffable repose. These are inklings of the understanding, but they become the intuitions of the soul. The promise becomes the prospect; the prospect becomes the possession.—*H. S. Carpenter.*

*MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12—26.*

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxi. 12-22; LUKE xix. 45-48.)

Vers. 12-14. *The useless tree.*—Dangers were closing round the Saviour, and He prudently spent His nights, except the last fatal one, not at Jerusalem, but the neighbouring village of Bethany. This miracle was wrought on Monday, the second day of Holy Week. Perhaps the reason of His being hungry so early in the day was that He had spent a portion of the night or early morning in prayer. His early departure probably arose from a holy haste to enter upon the work of the day. He inherited the physical weaknesses of our nature, and so qualified Himself to sympathise with His people in all physical trials (Heb. ii. 14, iv. 15).

I. The miracles of our Lord generally contained a symbolic element; but this miracle is a symbol in itself.—In this He was following the examples of the prophets, who often acted out their parables. It was a mode of teaching that excited livelier attention than an oral statement, and produced a deeper impression upon the mind. Indeed the Jewish Temple, with its outer court, high priests, offerings and ordinances, was a stupendous parable uttered in the form of sign and symbol. It is objected that our Lord, knowing, as from His omniscience He must have done, that there was no fruit upon the fig tree, went to it as though expecting to find fruit. In His action there was no insincerity. The language used is a mode of speech often used, especially in figurative teaching.

II. But is not this miracle at variance with the ordinary operations of Him who came "not to destroy, but to fulfil"?—Other miracles were exercises of love, acts of giving and creation; this is an act of destruction. Here He appears as a punishing God. Solitary as it is, it shews that, while our Lord "delighteth in mercy," He does not shrink from executing judgment when required. Its solitariness as an act of judgment exhibits in impressive lights the exceeding greatness and bountifulness of His love. But why should He put forth His anger upon a tree, which, not being a moral agent, could not be conscious of guilt? A tree has no sentient existence, much less intelligent and moral consciousness, and therefore could not be a fit subject for praise or blame. That the fig tree *was* an inanimate existence is a sufficient reply to the objection. It was not capable of suffering, and could therefore be lawfully used as a means for ends lying beyond itself. Our Lord did not attribute any moral responsibilities to the fig tree; He simply used it to represent moral qualities. Other considerations may be advanced which bear upon the justice of this act. The situation of the tree was very favourable for fruit-bearing. Being planted on the roadside, it was not private property. It was not a sound tree that our Lord caused to wither. Its life had begun to decay, and our Saviour's sentence only hastened a process that would have advanced in the course of nature.

**III. But why should Christ vent His indignation upon the fig tree if the usual season for fruit-bearing had not arrived?**—Was this consistent with the justice and reasonableness which ruled Him in all His dealings? It was: for the fruit usually appeared before the leaves; and if the fig tree could produce leaves, what excuse had it for being fruitless? “Where is the propriety,” says Dr. Thomas, “of allowing it to occupy a position, and to appropriate nourishment, which, if granted to another tree, would result in abundant fruitfulness? Let it die. Why should its roots steal the nutriment of the soil, its leafy branches obstruct the genial rays of heaven, and prevent their falling on better plants? Usefulness is the grand end of all created existence, and the function of justice is to remove out of the way whatever answers not its original design. Justice clears the universe of the worthless. The fruitless tree it burns; the salt that has lost its savour it casts forth as rubbish; the spirit that perverts its powers it divests of its freedom and its influence, its privileges and enjoyments. Justice weeds the garden of the universe.”

**Lessons.**—1. It teaches that to our existence God has set a specific purpose. The fruit we are expected to bear is goodness—in other words, holy and useful living (Rom. vi. 22; Jas. iii. 18; Gal. iii. 22; Eph. v. 5; Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6; Jas. v. 20). 2. Like the fruitless fig tree, we are surrounded by conditions and means favourable to fruit-bearing. If no fruit appears, no fault can be found with the soil, air, clouds, sun, or with the culturing methods and appliances of the vine-dresser; the evil is in the tree (Jas. i. 13-15). 3. The appearance of goodness without the reality only aggravates our guilt. Standing beside the fruitless tree, the Master did not say, “This tree is an ornament to the surrounding landscape, a grateful shelter to the weary traveller; choirs of birds now and then make the branches quiver with delightful music.” Its leaves and blossoms could not be accepted as substitutes for fruit. 4. The evil of our spiritual barrenness is not confined to ourselves. We occupy space in the community that might be occupied with greater advantage by others. 5. When the sentence goes forth, ruin follows—complete, final, and irretrievable.—*J. H. Morgan.*

**Vers. 15-17. Reverence for God's house.**—On two very different occasions our Lord shewed His zeal for the honour of the Temple of God. At the commencement of His public ministry, when He went up to the Feast of the Passover, He found the sale of oxen and sheep and doves going on within the court of the Temple. And He drove them out and said, “Take these things hence; make not My Father's house a house of merchandise.” And now again, at the close of His ministry, He went up to the Passover, and He found the same abomination going on. And once more He drove out the profaners, and claimed for God's house the reverence and respect which is due to the house of prayer.

1. There can be no doubt that **the decay of religious feeling among the people, the loss of reverence for holy things and places, the weakening of their belief in God's actual and immediate presence with them,** was very closely connected and bound up with the coming destruction of the Jewish nation. 1. This faith in the presence of God in the Temple, and among the people whom He had chosen for Himself, was impressed on them by the law perhaps more distinctly and solemnly than any other truth. 2. And while their trust in God's presence was firm and unshaken, so long it was well with them. God did protect them from their enemies, and raised them to prosperity, and gave them abundance and peace and power. But when their faith failed, and they forgot God, and they lost their reverence and fell into sin, then He caused suffering to come upon them. Their sin found them out. 3. Is there not a lesson for us in this age? Are not the two besetting sins of the time, on



the one hand, a craving after money, a spirit of merchandise, which takes up our thoughts and occupies our time, and sorely interferes with our higher interests; and, on the other hand, a want of reverence, a slowness to see and confess the presence of God, that all we do and say is in His sight: that He is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. Our longing for money, what is it but a want of faith? We cannot trust God, that He will provide for us. We will make provision for ourselves and for our children's wants. We are slow to believe that it is really required that we should make sacrifice for Christ's sake. And therefore the love of the world is in danger of eating more and more into our hearts and driving out our religion, our trust, and our love, and our faith in a heavenly reward and coming glory. And if so, if this is a real evil, and if it be not timely checked, then assuredly the glory will be departing from us.

II. Besides this larger and more general lesson, there is also a thought which may come closer and more personally to ourselves. Our Lord teaches us very plainly, by cleansing the Temple at Jerusalem, that **a reverence is due to holy places**; that where the presence of God ought to be recognised and felt the common affairs of life ought not to find entrance. 1. When we come to approach God in prayer, and when we enter into the house which has been dedicated to the Lord, the charge given to Moses may still have its meaning for us: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." 2. And does not this condemn very strongly the lightness and irreverence with which so many will come to church? When we kneel upon our knees, it is not to go through an unmeaning form, but to pray for pardon and for grace. When we listen, we must try to apply to our hearts the lessons which God's Word would teach. Our carelessness, our littleness, our vanity, our worldly thoughts, all these must be put away. We are drawing near to our God, and we desire to be drawn yet closer towards Him in faith and love. And He will draw nigh to us. He is present with us when we seek His pardon—present with us when we sing His praise—present with us when we hear His message—present with us when we kneel to receive the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood.—*Canon Nevill.*

Ver. 17. *God's house "an house of prayer for all nations."*—The Temple at Jerusalem, while it stood, might well be classed amongst "the wonders of the world": not merely on account of the magnificence of its conception, the splendour of its ornaments, or the costliness of its worship; but, even more, for the anomalous character of the principle on which it was founded, and of the religious system to which it belonged. In the Jewish creed it was regarded as the habitation of Him who, according to another article of the same belief, "dwelleth not in temples made with hands." Dedicated to the service of the God of the whole earth, who "made of one blood all nations of men," it was yet strictly exclusive. It was surrounded by spacious courts. Of these the first or outer court, which encompassed all the rest, was called "the Court of the Gentiles," because Gentiles were allowed to enter into but not beyond it. This court was separated from the next—that of the Israelites—by a low stone wall, on which stood pillars at equal distances, with inscriptions signifying to all not of the seed of Abraham that that was *their* place and they must proceed no farther. Now, it is the removal of this particular disability, which is predicted in the words quoted by our Lord from Isaiah. There was at all times a prescribed method by which "the son of the stranger" might join himself to the Lord's people, and become a member of "the commonwealth of Israel," and entitled to all the privileges of a born Jew. But this method was so little adopted in practice that it entirely fails to meet the language here used, even

if the words did not plainly refer to something to take place at a future time, and not to a provision already existing. And we know in fact that the Temple at Jerusalem never was, and could at no time be called, "an house of prayer for all nations." We must therefore understand the prophecy in a wider sense, as foretelling "the opening of the kingdom of heaven"—much more, therefore, the doors of the sanctuary—"to all believers." See Mal. i. 11; John iv. 21-24.

**I. The perfect freedom and openness of Divine ordinances in the Church of Christ.**—The Gentiles having long since been admitted into the Church—or rather, the Church as it now exists being composed for the most part of Gentiles—we may pass over that distinction as obsolete, and proceed to others. 1. There is no distinction of rich and poor in our Churches. In early times, indeed, some abuse of this kind appears to have crept in. See Jas. ii. 1-4. But we may fearlessly say that *our* assemblies are not liable to this charge. None is excluded or insulted because he is poor or meanly clad. Many, it is true, exclude themselves, on the ground that they have no clothes fit to come in, and they are ashamed to exhibit their "vile raiment" among the "gay clothing" of their neighbours. This is, in most cases, only a miserable subterfuge. 2. We acknowledge no distinction between learned and unlearned in Church. Neither class is shut out by any custom or practice calculated to repel. Everything said or done in the sanctuary has for its object the general edification, "that all may learn, and all may be comforted." (1) The Anglican Liturgy is a "Book of Common Prayer"—suited "for all people." Its greatest admirers are, no doubt, its most refined and intelligent ones, as an exquisite picture or statue or other work of art is best appreciated by those who have studied the principles of art. But "the common people" also are great admirers of the Prayer Book, and find therein—besides such plainness and simplicity as enables the most unlearned to say "Amen" to every sentence—a savour and spirit of devotion which is not perceptible, or in far less degree, in other compositions. (2) And with respect to the public instructions of the Church, here also the profit of all alike is kept in view. A minister, in preparing his sermon, remembers that there will be among his hearers persons of very different degrees of intelligence and cultivation. That he may not leave the unlearned entirely behind him, he has to use great plainness of speech, a good deal of repetition, and a certain homeliness and familiarity of illustration. On the other hand, the minds of the better educated demand correctness of style, closeness of reasoning, and general propriety of manner. He endeavours, therefore, not simply to descend to the level of the former class, but so to descend as to carry the others with him, so to adapt his instructions to both that the adaptation shall not be offensively perceptible to either. 3. Our churches are open to all characters of people—to good and bad, righteous and sinner, him that feareth God and him that feareth Him not. How could it be otherwise? Should we exclude the righteous? But these are the very persons whom God would have to worship Him, and whose godly supplications and "pure offerings" give a savour and seasoning to the whole sacrifice. Or should we refuse admission to the sinner? How, then, could we be the ministers of Him who "came to call," etc.? How could we, with any consistency, come into the house of God ourselves, seeing we are all "miserable sinners"? Only one class of persons there is whom we do not invite, and would rather not see, within the walls of the sanctuary, viz. those who are living in the open, shameless, and defiant practice of iniquity. These we would exclude, not permanently, but for a time, until they shew so much regard to decency and public morality as constitutes the lowest qualification for one who seeks admission into a religious assembly. We would, by this temporary exclusion, shame them and bring them to a better mind; or, if not, lighten their damnation

by just so much guilt as they would have incurred by offering to the Lord an abomination instead of a sacrifice.

II. **The true nature of the Christian sanctuary—it is a house of prayer.**—In thus setting aside not only *a* part, but *the emphatic* part, of the sentence as originally uttered—"for all nations"—we are justified by our Lord Himself, who here refers the quotation to a question, not of the admissibility or inadmissibility of others than Jews to the privileges of the Temple, but of the use and abuse of the Temple itself. Whether open to all people, or reserved for a privileged tribe; whether appropriated to the imposing ceremonies of the Jewish ritual, or to the less sensuous solemnities of Christian worships,—the Lord's house still maintains its character of "an house of prayer." From this expression we may learn—1. What is the proper business of this place—prayer; *i.e.* prayer in its widest sense, including every act of devotion in which a Christian congregation may appropriately unite. Besides prayer, properly so called, by which we make our joint requests known unto God, "the voice of joy and praise" enters largely into those common supplications which we make with one accord in the Lord's house. But let us ever remember that, being thus explained, prayer, and prayer alone, is our proper business there. It is necessary to lay great stress upon this, for it is a matter which is greatly misapprehended by many. They will tell one they go to Church to *hear*. They listen to the prayers, and that is all. It is only when these are concluded that they rouse themselves, and begin to give their best attention to the discourse which is expected to follow, in the hope of hearing, if not something new, at least something not quite so stale and antiquated as that "form of sound words" in which the Church has for centuries poured forth her devotions before God. Such persons are fond of talking of the more or less "good" that they get from their attendance at public worship; and they estimate the amount of "good" by the manner and degree in which their feelings are excited by the sermon. There is a better test than that. Shew me the man who has *prayed* the best, and I will shew you the man who has got the most "good"; for he has got—whatever he asked. But if any man who has not truly joined in the prayers imagines that he has received any real benefit from the sermon, he deceives himself. The thing is impossible. It is opposed to the clearest rule of the dispensation of grace. See Luke viii. 18. 2. What is the proper behaviour of this place. Whatever deportment, in look, gesture, or manner, is suited to the act of prayer, the same is becoming demeanour in "the house of prayer"; and whatever is foreign to the business of the place is also inappropriate to the place itself. Now what is prayer, and what are the manner and behaviour of a person engaged in prayer? Prayer is the most serious—I had almost said *awful*—transaction in which a human being can be employed. A man who is truly praying, whether in public or private—praying effectually, fervently, and with all his soul—is a sight which cannot be mistaken for anything but what it really is. And when a number of persons are so engaged, praying with one accord in one place, striving together in their fervent addresses to the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort," we should expect to see still more legibly stamped on every feature and gesture the characteristic marks of their employment, the outward and visible signs of heartfelt devotion. Is it so in our churches? Would a stranger entering while service is going on perceive at once that it was a place in which prayer was wont to be made, and that the congregation was so engaged at that moment? Would he be carried away by the contagion of so many bended knees and blended voices, so many eyes cast down to the ground and hands lifted up to heaven; and so, falling down on his face, would he worship God, and report that God was in us of a truth?



Ver. 17. *The advantage of a liturgy in public worship.*—One of the most interesting objects to the eye of the contemplative man must ever be an assembly of Christians engaged in public worship. The literary mind may revert on such an occasion, to those sad spectacles of superstition and cruelty which disgraced even the most enlightened periods of heathen history; and the observer of human character will call to mind and compare the infinite variety of follies and delusions which to this day mar the religious observances of all uncivilised nations. The purity of Christian worship will be well illustrated by the contrast. There are differences, however, among the professors of Christianity with regard to the public worship of God. These may be considered to resolve themselves, in some degree, into one great question—that of the use of a liturgy or set form of prayer.

I. The great criterion, by which we may judge of the advantage of a liturgy in public worship, is **its effect on the minds of the worshippers, and its suitability to the object for which they are assembled.**—God's house is "the house of prayer." How, then, is a congregation assembled there to address itself to the throne of grace? How is it to speak, with only one voice, the language of all, so that each individual may thoroughly enter into the spirit of the supplication without perplexity a distraction? This result can only be secured, we apprehend, by the use of a regular "form of sound words" (2 Tim. i. 13), known, understood, and approved by all, which shall be a guarantee to them that they are not going to utter collectively what they dissent from as individuals, and that they are not going to insult the Majesty of Heaven with what is unintelligible, offensive, or unscriptural; so that the understanding not being *now* employed in comprehending or the judgment in approving it, the heart may be at full liberty to feel its effect, and every prayer uttered by the minister may ascend at once to heaven as the united offering of the congregation. Thus the object of the assembly is fully answered. Though but one for the most part spoke, they all prayed; and having thus poured forth their collective petitions, they retire to their homes, where, at their accustomed seasons, and according to their individual methods, each may address his particular prayer to the Father which seeth in secret.

II. Another advantage of a liturgy is **its efficacy as a source of union**—a rallying-point around which, as a centre, a whole nation may assemble with that harmony of religious intercourse which should distinguish all who profess and call themselves Christians. A liturgy protects a Church against needless innovations—against the effects of misguided zeal or internal faction, which would disturb or rend it asunder—against the caprice, the errors, and the passions of the human mind. It is also most useful as a standard of purity in doctrine, through which, as an untainted channel, the great truths of Christianity having been crystallised, may be transmitted, unaltered and uncorrupted, to future generations. If these truths were left to be explained only through the uncertain and variable medium of preaching, they would soon be wrested and tortured by the injudicious or the enthusiastic minister, and the people would be lost in a labyrinth of unintelligible or contradictory doctrine: but when they are embodied and illustrated in a well-modelled form of public worship, the perversion of them becomes more difficult, and the minds of the people are less likely to be led astray.

III. A liturgy is **a constant reminder that the great object of our meeting in church is prayer.**—The importance of this point being kept prominently in view will be evident if we glance for a moment at the appearance which the religious world at this day exhibits. It is notorious that amongst the adherents of the numerous Christian societies which have sprung up during the last three centuries a spirit of preaching has superseded the spirit of prayer. They assemble together for the avowed purpose of listening to the discourse of a minister, which

is the main feature of their meeting. Some of them, indeed, sensible that this is not as it should be, have introduced the Anglican Liturgy, or selections from it, into their religious services. Others have attempted to defend their disuse of a Prayer Book by the authority of the Primitive Church, asserting that in so doing they are only laying aside the unnecessary accretions which time has attached to public worship, and returning to the purity and simplicity of original usage. But there is little force in this argument. The worship of the early Christians, who were scattered abroad in small numbers, and who had moreover been just converted to Christianity, was necessarily imperfect in various respects. They had not yet had time to arrange for themselves a regular form of service to take the place of the old Jewish ritual, although there are traces in the New Testament that they had already begun to do so. They existed also in a state of constant alarm, from persecution either impending or actually raging, which forced them to be content to assemble when they could and how they could. No comparison can be instituted between their case and that of Christians in this present age, who enjoy leisure, liberty, and all means of organisation in abundance. The Church is never likely to consent to such a retrograde step as the abandonment of what has been found so practically beneficial. To do this would be to exchange system and order for confusion and chaos.

Vers. 22, 23. *The power of faith.*—Our Lord's grand earthly work was the work of atonement. But there were other designs of great importance which He accomplished whilst He sojourned among men. Not the least of these was to fit and prepare His disciples for carrying on the work of the kingdom after His departure. And, in reference to this matter, His anxiety manifestly deepens, and His efforts become more urgent, as the time of His offering-up draws near. At this period how earnest and how oft repeated were His warnings to the disciples regarding the dangers and sufferings and disappointments of their carnal expectations which awaited them! how earnest and oft repeated His efforts to lead them to their true source of strength and victory in God! "Have faith in God" is the burden of many a discourse, the peculiar lesson of many a parable and many a wondrous work. This was the lesson which the miracle of the cursing and withering of the fig tree was designed to illustrate. He would thus prepare the mind of His disciples to meet many and great difficulties in the prosecution of their work, and would teach them also that they must not be downcast and discouraged, since their faith in God endowed them with an irresistible strength, before which every difficulty must vanish.

I. **Who are those to whom these cheering words are addressed?**—Primarily, they were addressed by our Lord to His personal friends and followers whom He had chosen as apostles. The promise was given to them in their character of labourers in the Lord's vineyard, servants of the kingdom of God. And it is equally valid for all who labour and strive for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. The work of the world's salvation from sin and Satan was begun by the Lord in person, and by His death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead He ensured its successful issue. But it was ordained by Divine Wisdom that the prosecution of the work in detail should be accomplished by the instrumentality of human agents. Every Christian is entitled to appropriate the gracious language of our text as addressed to him; for he is one whom the Lord hath found in the market-place, and hired, and sent to work in His vineyard. Every preacher of the gospel can claim the promises as specially made to him; for is he not sent expressly on the Lord's business? Every congregation of the Lord's people is entitled to rest upon it; for have they not banded themselves together in the Lord's name, for the very purpose of advancing His work and His kingdom in the world?

**II. What is the promise made to those who are doing the Lord's work and seeking the advancement of His kingdom?** (ver. 23 : see also Matt. xvii. 20). —

There is no enemy so mighty, no difficulty so great, that may not be conquered in the might of that Divine strength with which the Christian is endowed. 1. Look at the individual Christian, even if he be one of the lowliest and feeblest of the children of the kingdom — one of those hidden ones whom the world notices not. Mark well his history, and you will find that his whole life has been, at every step, the march of a mighty, resistless power, going forth conquering and to conquer. He has waged a warfare with no mere power of flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places; and he has triumphed. Sin and Satan still abide with him indeed, ever striving to foment rebellion among the members of his mortal body; but they no longer reign—their hour of power is gone. And in the exercise of that same power by which he has subjected them, he shall at length shake himself fully and for ever clear of their polluting touch. Nor is this all the victory that every humblest Christian has gained. He has triumphed over a condemning law. The mountain of guilt and the sentence of death are powerless to arrest his progress, as he presses forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ. 2. Look also at the Church in general, in its progress from age to age. The work given her to do is nothing less than the salvation of the world from the dominion of Satan, and the subjection of it, in all its nations, to the holy and righteous rule of the Prince of Peace. In the barren fig tree, with its large promise and total lack of fruit, the disciples were called on to recognise a symbol of the enemies of the gospel — a striking symbol especially of the Church's mightiest and most malignant foe, Antichrist — the service of the devil, under the name and profession of the truth. Always is the Lord's vineyard preoccupied by the deceitful plants of the devil's sowing. Before the seed of life can grow these must be hewn down and rooted out. But who shall venture to touch them, guarded as they are by a banded world and by the hosts of hell? What weapon do the feeble followers of the Crucified wield, with which to strike down the deep-rooted, wide-spreading evil power? Their Lord reveals to them the secret of their strength in that mighty word of faith before which the barren fig tree withered and died in a day. But that tree which sucked the strength of the garden of the Lord, and covered it with its deadly shade, withered at a word. And so is it with all the Church's enemies. The Church is as yet in the agony of the contest. She sees with trembling heart the tide of victory sway continually backwards and forwards. Her battle is not fought, her warfare is not accomplished, until the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. The Church is a tree which must still grow on, until she fills the earth with her branches. But, all imperfect as she is, what marvellous growth has she made since her beginning, when she was small as a mustard seed!

**III. What is the secret of the Church's marvellous strength?** — It is revealed in the words, "Have faith in God." Have faith in God, and then shall follow the wonderful triumphs indicated. 1. God's people work their work and fight their foes in the strength of the Almighty. Have faith, *not in yourself, but in God*: expect success, not in your own strength, but in God's. Not only is He with us amid the mountains, the grand towering difficulties of the Christian life; even in the performance of duties apparently the most simple and easy man could do nothing in the strength of the flesh. And, blessed be God, the Christian does not need to try. Though we are not sufficient of ourselves, we *are* sufficient, ay, even to work wonders, if the Christian work should require them, and our Lord should command. In all things, external



or internal, great or small, it is ever God that worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. 2. God interposes on behalf of His people to work with them and fight for them on occasion of their faith. Their faith is the measure and condition of their victory. So that in a sense their strength lies in their faith. There is indeed no true efficacy in faith itself; but *only on occasion of faith* does the Almighty work for His people. To remove the mountains of our difficulties, then, we must apply ourselves to our work in faith,—not in the spirit of presumptuous self-confidence, but in faith; not in the spirit of doubt and fear, but in faith.—*Jas. Hamilton.*

Ver. 23. *The weakness and difficulties of doubt.*—I wish to speak of doubt rather than of doubtfulness. Doubtfulness is a chronic, sensitive condition of soul; doubt, an acute, sensitive condition of mind. Doubt, in the end, may degenerate into spiritual doubtfulness—spiritual doubtfulness amounting, in extreme instances, to spiritual death; but, in the beginning, doubt, at least in its higher forms, is less often spiritual than intellectual. Without contradiction there are many low and base forms of doubt—doubt supervening on spiritual neglect, and moral transgressions, and sensual indulgences. But without contradiction also there are high and noble forms of doubt—unwilling doubt, which is most painfully miserable at its incapacity to believe.

I. **Nor is this species of doubt altogether an evil.**—For there is a strong tendency in human nature to acquiesce in authority, most of all in spiritual authority. Spiritual truths are often so difficult to discern, there is such a chaos of religious opinion weltering in Christendom, that for peace and certainty's sake men are inclined to bow beneath any dominion which professes to hold the keys of truth and light. And the more subjugate men are, the more autocratic and unreasoning this dominion becomes, until at length, in order completely to enslave human reason, the dominion utterly violates it, ever encroaching upon and narrowing the limits of free, religious intelligence. And if it were not for the resistances and reformations of doubt, this tyrannous dominion of authority would assuredly usurp the throne of all religious life. Even in Christian Churches which boast of their liberties, and profess to abhor all manner of ecclesiastical despotism, the prevalence of doubt is rapidly expanding those liberties, and imparting greater health and vigour to the general religious tone. It is making the Bible a more real, more intelligible, more living book. It is stripping prayer of its spurious attributes, and clothing it with vast and most heavenly power. It is insisting, with St. James, that faith is more than confessions and creeds—it is life and work. It is making manifest that the essence of Christianity is sacrifice, and that without sacrifice no one can be a Christian. By taking away the false, doubt is making conspicuous the true elements in religion.

II. **Yet there are obvious dangers attending the practice of doubt.**—Doubt is apt to run into excess, and the excess of anything is evil. If the excess of faith be superstition, the excess of doubt is feebleness. The tendency of doubt is always to cripple men, to make them hesitate and do nothing. In every department of life it is impossible to succeed without believing; if we do not believe in what we are doing, we cannot do it well. We are like trees whose roots are all on the surface; the first winds of obstacle uproot and blow us down. Our strength is as the strengthlessness of a fractured arm, dangling down in impotence and pain; no one can lean upon us for support, and we ourselves are maimed and powerless. Most of all is this true of religion. In religion the stern necessity for occasional doubt may be wholesome; but the easy indulgence in continuous doubt is deadly. Doubt starves the soul; it makes lean and feeble the inner man. The pre-essential of all success in religion is mighty, living faith. Without faith even Christianity itself is feebleness.

**III. There are doubters and doubters.**—There are those who scarcely care whether they believe or not; to them doubting is at least painless, if not absolutely welcome. But there are others who earnestly desire to believe, to whom doubting is misery, and yet who seem unable to preserve themselves from doubt. These yearning souls long for that eye which sees the Invisible, that hand which touches the Eternal, that spirit which can commune with the Infinite and be inspired with the All-Holy; yet, amid all the wonders and loveliness of nature, all the solaces and promises of the gospel, all the experiences and mercies of daily life, they are unable to believe; or, if they believe at all, their faith is like the dimness of the twilight, and not like the splendour of the meridian sun. To such persons, I say, doubt is misery—the misery of the caged bird, the misery of the shorn and blinded Samson, the misery of the discrowned king. What are they to do? Is there no relief or way of escape? Will the darkness never turn to light, and the weakness of doubt be exchanged for the power of faith?

**IV. There is one method of strengthening faith which we all may wisely practise.**—It is the method of fairly confronting doubt with its own difficulties. It is when we throw ourselves out of ourselves, and project our thoughts upon the universe, that the difficulties of doubt present themselves with huge force and emphasis. For what is the nature of the universe in which we live? It is boundless in extent, yet perfect in harmony. Whence then, I ask, comes this perfection, this punctuality, this absolute order and precision of the universe—an order compared with which the highest human regulations are chaos, a precision than which the keenest human intelligence cannot conceive anything more precise? You answer it is all the result of law. But what is law? I reply. Whence came the law? An effect without a cause is, to my mind, an inconceivable idea. So also is an effect higher than its cause. If the effect be reasonable and intelligible, the cause must be Intelligence and Reason; for you cannot deduce reasonableness from non-reason, or intelligibility from non-intelligence. I am thus compelled by the sublimities and the harmonies of the universe to assign their origin to an intelligent Creator. And when we ascend the scale of being until we reach the kingdom of man (man, with all his littleness and sin, but with all his greatness too—his powers to think, to love, to remember, to aspire), we ask again, Whence spring all this intelligence, these emotions, these longings of our human nature? Water will not rise higher than its source; and man cannot soar beyond his original. The original of man therefore must be higher and greater than man himself. And when to all this you add the teachings of history, the character of the world's moral government, the voice of conscience, the imaginations and inspirations of the human soul, and ask from what beginning did they come, the simplest and the most satisfying of all answers is, "Their builder and maker is God."—*Canon Diggle.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

**Vers. 13, 14. Pretension and performance.**—1. There is apt to be most pretension where there is least performance (Rev. iii. 17). 2. There are many ways of making profession. Observance of the forms of Christian life is profession; Church membership is profession; statement of our habit and ways is a profession, and generally

a loud one, for no one can easily speak about himself without self-laudation, openly or covertly, coming in; criticism, assumptions of being all right, and fault-finding are professions, loud professions, for to censure others' faults is tantamount to declaring our freedom from them; and self-defence is sometimes a form of profession. 3. The

only ground on which men or things are spared by the judgment of God is that they yield good fruit. Where love is, and the likeness to Christ is, there is endurance and reward. Where only profession is there is judgment. 4. The stroke of judgment is swift. Fearfulness surprises the hypocrites. It is striking by what slow processes reputations are built up, and by what swift judgments they are brought down. 5. The angerless judgment of Christ is very solemn.—*R. Glover.*

*The mission of the Church—to feed hungry souls.*—As Jesus turned to that fig tree, drawn thereto by the tree's profession of fruitfulness, so hungry souls turn to the Church and to God's professed people to find spiritual food. What that tree with leaves and no fruit was to Jesus, the Jewish Church was to people in their soul-hunger. With their burden of sin, with their deep heart-questionings, with their sorrows, with their unsatisfied longings, with their yearnings for help and sympathy, they turned to the priests, the professed spiritual guides, if haply they might get from them what they wanted. So the mission of the Church is to feed hungry souls. In the hour of penitence, when the soul is conscious of guilt; in the day of trouble, when the world has no more to give; in the shadow of death; in all the great crises of life,—even the most worldly turn to the Church for what they need.—*J. R. Miller, D.D.*

*The cursing of the fig tree.*—This is Christ's first and only miracle of judgment. It is wrought as an acted dramatised parable, not for any physical advantage, but wholly for the instruction which it conveys. 1. It is complained that by this act Jesus deprived some one of his property. But the same retributive justice of which this was an expression was preparing to blight presently all the possessions of all the nation. Was this unjust? And of the numberless trees that are blasted year by year,

why should the loss of this one only be resented? Every physical injury must be intended to further some spiritual end; but it is not often that the purpose is so clear, and the lesson so distinctly learned. 2. Others blame our Lord's word of sentence, because a tree, not being a moral agent, ought not to be punished. It is an obvious rejoinder that neither could it suffer pain; that the whole action is symbolic; and that we ourselves justify the Saviour's method of expression as often as we call one tree "good" and another "bad," and say that a third "ought" to bear fruit, while not much could be "expected of" a fourth. 3. In this word of sentence Jesus revealed His tenderness. It would have been a false and cruel kindness never to work any miracle except of compassion, and thus to suggest the inference that He could never strike, whereas indeed, before that generation passed away, He would break His enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel.—*Dean Chadwick.*

Ver. 14. That which does no service to Christ is found unworthy to render service to man (Luke iii. 9).—*J. A. Bengel.*

*Usefulness the sole test.*—This fig tree was in some respects a good one. Its timber probably was sound; and as for its leaves, they were abundant. But a fruit tree is valued neither for its timber nor its foliage, but for its fruit. As with trees, so with everything else: the important question is, "What is their obvious purpose or final cause?" A building may be a very good thing in its way; it may be at once durable and ornamental. But if it is not subserving the purpose for which it was erected nor any purpose, what then? Simply this—Let it be "improved from off the face of the earth." This is, I think, the dictum of common sense, as it certainly is the principle to which Jesus Christ gives a practical and concrete Amen! "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever"; for thou art not



meeting "the wants of the time."—*J. S. Swan.*

Vers. 15-17. *Cleansing of the Temple.*  
—From this narrative we learn—  
1. The blinding force of self-interest, for doubtless they were no more sensible of their iniquity than many a modern slave-dealer. And we must never rest content because our own conscience acquits us, unless we have by thought and prayer supplied it with light and guiding. 2. Reverence for sacred places, since the one exercise of His royal authority which Jesus publicly displayed was to cleanse the Temple, even though upon the morrow He would relinquish it for ever, to be "your house"—and desolate. 3. How much apparent sanctity, what dignity of worship, splendour of offerings, and pomp of architecture, may go along with corruption and unreality! 4. The might of holy indignation, and the awakening power of a bold appeal to conscience.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*Reverence due to Churches.*—Man has two employments in the present scene: the one earthly, the other of heaven; the one pertaining to the body, the other to the soul. And as the world generally is the place where He treats with man, and makes provision for the well-being of the body, so is this the chief appointed place for the business of heaven, and for securing those advantages which are great, but unspeakable. 1. Here, to take the first point in our spiritual history, we are baptised. Born into the world in a state of sin, born mere worldly beings, only fitted for and having no heritage but the earth: hither we are brought by our believing parents and pious sponsors, and are made the children of grace. Ought we not, then, to feel an awful and deep interest in the place where we have been set free from Adam's stain, and admitted to the light; where we have been delivered from the original curse, and obtained a blessing; where we have been saved from the bondage of the

devil, and been made the free sons of God; where, in short, the utterly lost and ruined were reinstated in their heritage, and again placed in their native home? 2. Here, when our reason and understanding are in some degree developed, we approach the sacred fount of inspiration, and drink in knowledge from the oracles of God. Ought we not to listen with reverence, when although we behold nothing with our outward senses, but men like ourselves, and the ambassador is weak and unworthy to do his office, yet the King of kings is here by his side, and by so worthless an instrument speaks His commandment? 3. Here we profess to do Him homage, and to fall low on our knees before His footstool. We are to feel our dependence, we are to lean on His arm, we are to confide in His love, we are to be pierced with the conviction of our helplessness and His power, and our distress and longings are to find utterance in prayer. And then to such prayers and such convictions, to such sincerity and such earnestness, He represents Himself as listening eagerly. How should you be careful and reverent when here, and "keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God"! "My house is a house of prayer." "There am I in the midst of them." 4. Here is offered up that feast and sacrifice peculiar to Christians, which commemorate the sacrifice made on the Cross. We have temples erected, we have altars set up, we have priests ordained, in succession, from age to age, that this great rite, the crown and sum of our solemnities, may be duly administered, and never cease whilst the world stands. Here, then, is another reason for exceeding reverence, that here "we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we are one with Christ and Christ with us." Here is the Divine Victim, here the health and life of man, here the precious blood, here the strengthening and refreshing of souls. Oh, how reverently should we deal with and

approach that house where the Son of God comes! 5. And shall I not add one other reason for affectionate yet solemn feeling towards the Churches of God?—that here the dead are lying, and that here are treasured up unto the dawn of the resurrection all the earthly remains of those you loved.

II. *The methods by which we can shew that we have a becoming sense of God's presence and majesty.*—1. If we have that respectful feeling which I have desired to inculcate, and which is pleasant to God, our hearts will be in a state of adoration and worship. We shall not permit, at least willingly, and if they intrude we shall strive against them, vain and idle thoughts or dreams from the world. 2. If the spirit of devotion fill the soul, it will make itself manifest in the outward gesture; for the body is the soul's instrument, and complies with the biddings of that which dwells within, even the immortal part of us, whether it be for evil or for good. 3. When a man considers that this is God's house; when he considers who God is; when he reflects on the purposes for which it is set apart, to be the audience chamber of the Almighty when He treats with man; that here he was reconciled to the Father, made a member of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit; that here God speaks to him, as from His heavenly throne; that he may lay before Him his supplications; that here our Saviour Jesus Christ comes by a mysterious presence; and that here are deposited the ashes of the dead,—he will desire the house of God to be in some degree worthy of its Divine Possessor. If an earthly prince choose to honour a subject, what expense is spared? What a cost of silver and gold, of gems and of raiment, of furniture and attendants. Ought the Almighty to be less honoured when He comes? Should His royal palace be less glorious?—*J. M. Chanter.*

Vers. 15, 16. *The force of a Holy Personality.*—The instrument which

Christ wielded was the power inherent in sinlessness. That made cravens of these worldlings. The voice of His holy zeal, entering with the paramount influence of purity and truth, awoke long-slumbering echoes in souls case-hardened with unholy commerce, and drove them from the scene of profane gain.—*S. D. F. Salmond.*

Ver. 15. *Christ resorting to the Temple.*—Being come to the city, He straightway entered into the Temple, either, as Gregory noteth, to declare “that the fault of the priests is the ruin of the people,” and therefore His principal care was to correct and reform them; or else to give all men an example of diligence in repairing to the house of God.—*Archbishop Sandys.*

Ver. 16. *A great principle vindicated.*—It seems to have become a common practice for the Jews to take the implements of their daily toil with them into the Temple at the hours of devotion, and make the sacred inclosure a thoroughfare from one part of the city to another. There was no express ordinance interdicting such a practice, and in ordinary circumstances it might have seemed innocent enough to avail oneself of the short cut there provided. But it was at variance with the spirit in which the place was to be used, and Jesus could give it no licence. So uncompromising was the Son's jealousy for the Father's honour even in trivial circumstances and seemingly indifferent incidents! The principle here again illustrated is of the highest consequence. It means that in order to keep ourselves unspotted from the world it is necessary to cast off along with the evil itself everything auxiliary to it or connected with it. Innocence from the great transgression implies practised self-restraint, not merely against the profanity which is seen, but against its appliances, occasions, accompaniments—against all that looks like it, conduces to it, is in sympathy with it.—*S. D. F. Salmond.*

Ver. 18. *The Indestructible Jesus.*—“Destroy Jesus.” How incredibly astounding these words sound in the ears of men who are accustomed to survey the world after it has been subjected for upwards of eighteen centuries to the uninterrupted presence of Jesus and the accumulating influences of Christianity! Yet they are words of a definite import: they are exact and significant enough; they announced a determination on the part of certain men, to which they were ready to give effect, and for the failure of which neither their wills nor their zeal may be held responsible.

**I. To what extent could the purpose of the foes of Jesus succeed?**—

1. They might succeed in disparaging His character and station before men. Their object is to prove that He is a blasphemer, a godless man, a rebel, an impostor. 2. Maliciously assaulting the person of Jesus was another step in the attainment of their merciless end. 3. Restraining His personal freedom was another step towards accomplishing their purpose. 4. A farther element in this series is the silencing of His tongue. They will hear its accusations no more; its severe utterances will grate on their feelings no more; no more will it publish before God and man their gross and wanton infidelity. 5. Another advance towards their full achievement is the torture they applied to His feelings. The arraigning, the accusation, the fearful perjury, the corrupt and vacillating judge, how must all these have wounded the spirit of the falsely accused! The barbarity, however, has not yet reached its height. Jesus heard them shout away His life, and shout out their preference of Barabbas to Himself. 6. Our next step takes us to the climax of this wicked purpose. They who had secured His condemnation felt that but one act was now wanting to perfect their design, and that they hasten to effect. As soon as the semblance and perversion of law permitted, they led Him away to crucify Him. They did crucify Him amid the

cheering of hardened spectators, and to the ineffable delight of those who had contrived the plot which ended here. (1) In that it was possible for Jesus to die lies the very basis of our redemption. (2) In the death of Jesus promises of the deepest import to our race were accomplished. (3) In the stooping of Jesus to death He knew our degradation in its farthest depth. (4) In the death of Jesus lay His most sublime victory for men.

**II. Some of the grand points in which the purpose of Jesus' assailants was an entire and egregious failure.**—

1. The very body of Jesus recovers its vitality. 2. The Deity that was within the destructible Temple they could not touch. 3. The violence of men against the person of Jesus could not frustrate or retard His designs. 4. The violent death of Jesus did not secure the permanence of the old Jewish establishment. Jesus was destroyed after the flesh, but lives again and lives for evermore; Judaism, in the very death of Jesus, expired, and has never since revived; it has vanished away, whilst Jesus abideth ever. 5. The success of the ungodly did not lead to the destruction of the new kingdom, or to the dethronement of Jesus.

**In conclusion**, to render the topic practically useful, we shall briefly indicate who they are that now sympathise with the unholy purpose we have been discussing, and also who they are who are in a living and sanctifying sympathy with the Indestructible Jesus. 1. To the first class belong—(1) All such as are unbelievers in Jesus. (2) Those who, however upright their outward life may be, yet, in spite of God's commending His Son to them, remain utter worldlings. (3) Where too must they rank who but partially receive the record that God gave of His Son? 2. But there are some that belong to the latter class whom we have no difficulty in identifying. (1) Such as labour and pray daily to purify themselves as Christ is pure. (2) The penitent, who in his grief and humiliation comes to Jesus Christ for pardon and



peace. (3) The Christian who leaves all and follows Jesus, who is content with deprivations, bereavements, and shame, that he may follow and serve Jesus, gives a most convincing proof of where his sympathies lie.

*Truth divides men.*—Truth always makes a division among men. Some think of nothing but to persecute and suppress it, while others admire, love, embrace, and practise it. It is a dreadful thing to see here who they are who take the resolution to destroy it, without doubt not imagining they were doing it, but really believing themselves on its side. There are some particular seasons in which it is almost necessary for a man to lie concealed in the crowd of people, to prevent his having any hand in the persecution of truth. That which a man is hindered from doing against it by nothing but fear alone is already done in the heart.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 19. *The conservation of human energy.*—In these days of high pressure, when the capital as well as the interest of life has often to be drawn upon, when we have to make such unnatural and excessive drains upon our energies, and when as a consequence our ailments are not specific diseases, nor organic maladies, but simply nervous exhaustion, loss of tone throughout the fibre of our constitution, the example of our Lord even in a purely *physical* way inculcates a most salutary lesson, urges upon us the solemn obligation to maintain the fabric of our energies in good repair. To preserve the conditions and to obey the commands of the laws of health, to exercise our force so as best to conserve it, to regard life as an inviolable unity, where hurt or loss to one member entails lack of energy or good condition on the rest, where such is the quick and constant sympathy of the various parts that disregard of the meanest involves the derangement and desecration of the whole—these simple intimations of common sense, little as at times we may wot, are yet the

prime, the paramount obligations of Christianity.—*D. Dickie.*

Ver. 20. *The withered fig tree.*—The real fig tree is the chosen people, planted by God in a chosen land. At the appointed time Jesus, the Messenger of the Father, has come to urge upon them penitence and faith. These are the fruits for which He hungered, and which He longed to gather. God strikes with death whatsoever of His favoured creatures has received His bounty and His care, His waiting and His love, in vain. All history is strewn with the remains of those works of man which the living Spirit of God has not builded, lying shattered under the blows of time. All history is cumbered with the dead bodies of those sterile beings who, though born of the breath of God, have not responded to His call, but have falsified His hopes for them. The very type of their decay is found in Judaism, withered to the roots. Incapable of producing any fruits of religion, it yet remains standing, shewing even in its barrenness the terrible malediction with which Jesus has weighed it down.—*Father Didon.*

Vers. 22-24. *The source of supernatural power.*—All supernatural power has its source in absolute faith in God. He who is endued with perfect faith enters into communion with the Divine Being, and God makes him the instrument of His goodness and His power. If omnipotence has been granted to Jesus, it is because His humanity is permeated with the fulness of the Divine Spirit; in subordination to its sovereign control He executes unflinchingly its wishes, its motions, and its works. What He Himself was, Jesus required of His disciples to become. "Then," He said, "nothing will withstand you." We should strangely misinterpret His words if we were to believe that the Spirit of God is at the beck and call of the caprice and vain desires of men. We must ask of God only His holy will; and in order to

thoroughly enter into it we must pray—that is, we must make ourselves one with it in absolute self-denial. Then and then only will the Spirit of God inspire us with a good desire, the desire which is always listened to by God, for it comes from Him.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 22. *Faith in God* is a living, dominant conviction concerning God, His being, His character and government. It is that act and habit of the soul by which the truth concerning God is drawn in from the distant regions of speculation and enthroned over the character and the life. It is an act of the whole mind: of the intellect, which sees; but also of the conscience, which responds; of the will, which chooses; of the heart, which fears and revere, which loves and trusts. It is that act and habit of the soul by which the notion concerning God becomes a reality, the chief of realities, ever present, all controlling, the perfect object of fear, of service, and of love.—*E. G. Andrews.*

*Faith in God means faith in the supremacy of good.*—By this faith Christianity accomplished its successes at first; by this faith all great reforms have been carried on. It is faith, not only in God, but in man, as the child of God. It is the faith that man is capable of seeing truth and obeying it—capable of seeing the right and doing it. Thus, and thus alone, is evil overcome by good. We can only overcome the evil in ourselves in the same way—by faith that Jesus is really the Christ; therefore that goodness will at last rule in our souls, mould our consciences, lift us above temptation and evil.—*J. F. Clarke.*

Ver. 23. *Faith removing mountains.*—The only mountains faith desires to remove are such as are substantial obstacles in the path of mercy. It is marvellous how many such have been removed,—enormous evils, like the slave-trade of seventy years ago, like slavery in America; degradation and superstition, like those holding the

natives of New Guinea; pride and secularity, like that which seemed to make the conversion of the Roman Empire impossible. There is no impossibility to those who can lay hold on God.—*R. Glover.*

*The spirit of doubt is the spirit of weakness.*—It cripples the will, so that no life of high resolve is possible to it; it produces unrest and discontent; it looks always at the dark side of the picture; and its prevalence in this age largely accounts for that pessimism which, like a shadow, follows it into all its dreary and desolate places. Trace the social discontent, the destructive tendency of much of our literature, especially in the sphere of philosophy—the socialism, anarchism, and all the grumbling and rebelling against constitutional order and the law of the land,—trace these tendencies of our modern life to their source, and you will find *there* religious doubt, as one of the essential preconditions accounting to a large extent for what we see amongst a vast class of our population. For I maintain that when a nation or any large community forming part of its organic life loses faith in the verities of religion, when it is given over to the service of selfishness or halts between faith and unbelief, and when this tendency continues for any lengthened period, then there has begun the downward movement of national dismemberment and decay. But, on the other hand, the spirit of faith is the spirit of strength, so that all things are possible to him who believeth.—*M. McLellan.*

Ver. 24. *The conditions of effectual prayer.*—1. We must pray in truth—that is, we must ask for what we really wish. We must pray in spirit—that is, we must ask for the right thing. 3. We must pray in faith, believing that our prayers will be heard and answered.—*J. F. Clarke.*

*Prayer and its answer.*—“All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe”—not that ye receive them, but “that ye have received them,” or,

still more closely, "that ye received them," "and ye shall have them." The answer to the prayer is thus declared to be coincident with the prayer itself. The petition is granted at the very moment when it is framed; the blessing for which we look does not follow at some distant time through any outward events, but is given at once, when, with absolute, childlike trust, we lay the thoughts of our hearts open before our Father. Prayer, in a word, is the conscious and glad acceptance of God's will for us when we have first endeavoured to estimate our own wants.—*Bishop Westcott.*

*Confidence in prayer.*—It is only when the heart is very childlike that its desires are pure and wise enough to be left with God, and faith strong enough to leave them. If there seem but few prayers answered, it only proves that there are few prayers offered. For it is only good prayers that can be really prayed. Many that we "say" do not lift our desires to God and lodge them in His heart. Let this word shew us how great a thing is prayer, and how great are its issues. The time for the answer is not pledged, and the manner of it may differ from what we expected; but if we really pray we shall be heard.—*R. Glover.*

*Faith the substance of things hoped for.*—He doth not say, "believe that ye shall receive them," but that you do receive them, which plainly shews what kind of faith it is that He requires of us, even such a faith as is the very "substance of the things we hope for" (Heb. xi. 1), and gives a present being and substance to them. Faith is also "the evidence of things not seen." As by it we enjoy what God hath promised, so by it we behold what He hath revealed to us, though never so much above our reason or beyond our sight.—*Bishop Beveridge.*

*The power of believing prayer.*—Prayer obtains grace, wisdom, strength, self-mastery, peace, all which the soul dares wish for, for time or eternity; but it obtains more—it gains God.

O glorious prerogative of the faith of the simple peasant, ignorant of this world's knowledge, but having access to Divine! O glorious compendium of Divine illumining, whereby, not as in a mirror nor by laborious process, the soul shall have all knowledge, and shall see the secret cause of all created things, in the light of God, in God! Even gifts of God could not satisfy that vast soul of man—no wisdom, no intelligence, nothing which has any bound or end. Prayer fills this void, which all creation, out of God, could not fill. Prayer is "the ascent of the soul to God"; it is the beginning of that blessed converse which shall be the exhaustless fulness of eternal bliss; it is the continuance or renewal of union with God.—*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*

Vers. 25, 26. *Prayer and forgiveness.*—To His promise Jesus adds a precept, the admirable suitability of which is not at first apparent. Most sins are made evident to the conscience in the act of prayer. Drawing nigh to God, we feel our unfitness to be there; we are made conscious of what He frowns upon; and if we have such faith as Jesus spoke of, we at once resign what would grieve the Spirit of adoption. No saint is ignorant of the convicting power of prayer. But it is not of necessity so with resentment for real grievances. We may think we do well to be angry. We may confound our selfish fire with the pure flame of holy zeal, and begin, with confidence enough, yet not with the mind of Christ, to remove mountains, not because they impede a holy cause, but because they throw a shadow upon our own field. And therefore Jesus reminds us that not only wonder-working faith but even the forgiveness of our sins requires from us the forgiveness of our brother.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*God forgives us as we forgive others.*—We know that when rain falls not upon hard rock but upon broken ground, in due time a mist ascends from the ground and clothes itself in



the shape of clouds and returns in the form of showers, so that there is an action and reaction between the rich rain of heaven and the thin mists of earth. And in like manner there is a mutual interaction between God's mercy to man and man's mercy to his fellow: the first kindles the second, and the second rekindles the first; they produce and reproduce each other. This is an immutable moral law; therefore we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," i.e. in the like spirit of forgiving love. But if the sense of Divine forgiveness produces in the contrite heart a readiness to forgive, remember that it is this readiness to forgive in you, this tenderness of heart in you, this spirit of love in you, which keeps ever flowing full and free the current of God's forgiveness. That current may languish, dwindle, cease to flow; nay, from the sweet running water of love it may turn into a sullen pool of hate: it is, indeed, sure to stagnate in the stagnation of your faith and love. If you grow indifferent to your neighbour's welfare, envious, malicious, vindictive,

your soul, as it recedes from the desire to shew mercy, will precisely in the same degree recede from the power to receive mercy. See Matt. xviii. 21-35.

Ver. 26. *Anger a bar to forgiveness.*—What an inconsistency, to seek reconciliation with God while we ourselves are unreconciled to our neighbours! to seek to have our own sins remitted while we retain the sins of others! How can he who is "angry with his brother" hope to please God, since from the very beginning all such anger is prohibited? (Gen. iv. 6; Isa. i. 10-15).—*Tertullian.*

*Anger drives away the Spirit.*—Anger is a passion which, if it be long cherished, drives away the Spirit. For how canst thou think that the dove-like Spirit of God will reside where the heart remains full of gall? or that the celestial flame of Divine love should burn bright and clear where there are so many thick fumes and vapours rising up to damp and choke it? Canst thou in faith pray for forgiveness who dost not thyself forgive? (Eph. iv. 26; 1 Tim. ii. 8).—*Bishop Hopkins.*

# MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 27—33.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxi. 23-32; LUKE xx. 1-8.)

*Christ's authority challenged.*—I. The challenge by the chief priests and scribes and elders.—1. The occasion. Christ's teaching in the Temple. Observe—(1) His constant and unwearied pains and diligence in the duties of His public ministry. (2) Though the chief priests and scribes sought His life (ver. 18), yet He doth not refrain or forbear coming to Jerusalem, and into the Temple, and teaching the people there, and that daily. Hence learn that we ought not to forsake our calling, or give over the duties of it which God calls us to perform, for fear of outward dangers which may happen to us. God is able to protect us from all our enemies. 2. The persons that questioned with Christ about His calling and authority. (1) Such as for their high place and calling in the Church should be the greatest friends and favourers of Christ and the gospel, are often the greatest enemies to both. (2) Seeing there is such unity and consent amongst the wicked enemies of Christ, as here we see, this should teach us much more to labour for true unity and consent, whereby to join together for Christ, as these did against Him. 3. Their questioning. (1) There is something good and commendable here. (a) That they suppose, and take it for granted, that no man ought to take upon him any public office or function in the Church without a lawful calling and authority committed

to him. (b) That they themselves, being public officers and governors in the Church, do think it their duty to take care that none intrude or usurp any public office in the Church without a calling. (2) But there is also that which is evil and wicked. (a) Their malicious purpose against Christ. (b) Their gross hypocrisy and dissimulation. (c) Their wilful ignorance and blindness, in that being formerly convinced of His lawful calling and authority by so many evident signs and testimonies of it as they had seen and heard—viz. by the testimony of the Baptist, the excellence of His doctrine, and Divine power of His miracles—yet for all this they cannot, or rather will not, see what authority He had, but do now question Him about the same.

**II. The vindication of Himself by our Lord.**—1. The preface or preparation to the answer, wherein Christ tells them that He would also ask of them one question, which, if they could and would answer, then He would answer them. (1) In that our Saviour, knowing them to come with malicious purpose, doth not directly answer their question, we may learn that it is not always necessary or fit to give a direct answer to those demands or questions put to us by others, especially by malicious enemies of the truth, who come to cavil and entrap us with captious questions, and not with a mind to learn or receive satisfaction from us. (2) Though He does not directly answer their malicious question, yet He makes a kind of answer indirectly, by putting another question to them, and such a one as was sufficient (if they would have understood it) to resolve the matter, and to convince them: hence gather, that although it be not always necessary or fit to give a direct answer, nor yet any answer at all sometimes, to the questions of malicious cavillers, yet it is also fit sometimes to make some kind of answer to such captious questions, viz. so far forth as is necessary for the clearing of the truth and for the convincing of such cavillers (Prov. xxvi. 5; 1 Pet. iii. 15). 2. The answer itself. (1) In that Christ alleges the authority of John's ministry, to justify His own calling and authority, hence gather, that one main end of the calling and ministry of the Baptist was to declare and manifest the calling and authority of Christ Himself, by giving testimony to Him that He was the true Messiah promised and sent from God to be the Saviour of the world. (2) In that Christ here implies that John's ministry and doctrine concerning Him was from God, and therefore to be believed and embraced, which otherwise it should not have been: hence gather, that no doctrine or ministry is to be received and embraced in the Church but that which is from God, that is, of Divine authority, and not from men only. (3) In that Christ's asking here whether John's baptism or ministry was from heaven or of men doth thereby imply that it was indeed from heaven, and not from men: hence gather, the dignity and excellence of the doctrine and ministry of John, that it was the doctrine of God, and was preached and taught by authority from God Himself. (4) The dignity and excellence of the sacrament of baptism.

**III. The effects or consequents which followed.**—1. Their reasoning together about the matter, and consulting about the answer they should make. (1) Though they came very cunningly and politicly to examine and question with our Lord about His authority, to entrap Him and bring Him into trouble and danger, yet here we see they could not prevail against Him by their policy. See Prov. xxi. 30; Isa. viii. 10; Ps. ii. 1-4; Job v. 13; Ps. vii. 15. (2) See here one point of carnal wisdom in these enemies of our Lord, in that they, being now in a perplexity, do not rashly or suddenly proceed to make answer, but first reason and consult together. See Luke xvi. 8; Jer. iv. 22. 2. Now followeth the matter of their private reasoning or consultation together. (1) They cast what inconveniences or dangers to themselves are like to follow, if they answer thus or thus; but regard not the offence of God, and dishonour like to come to

Him, by their denying or concealing the truth, and that against their own knowledge. (2) They presuppose that if they should acknowledge John's ministry to be from heaven, then they were bound to believe his doctrine, and that Christ might justly reprove them for not doing so. (3) They feared the people's displeasure, and lest they should stone them for speaking against John and his ministry; but they were not moved with any fear of God to confess the truth, neither are they afraid of offending God by denying or concealing the truth. (4) The common and meaner sort of people are often more forward to embrace the gospel, and to esteem the ministers of it, than men of great place and dignity in the Church. 3. Their answer: "We cannot tell." This must needs be false; yea, it is a lying answer, containing an untruth uttered against their own knowledge. (1) God often takes and confounds the crafty and subtle enemies of the truth in their own policy (1 Cor. iii. 19). (2) It is the property and practice of wicked and profane men to lie and dissemble for their own benefit and advantage, as for their profit and gain, or to save their credit with men, or to help themselves out of trouble, or to prevent some inconvenience or danger like to come upon them. (3) How fearful a thing it is for any to be given up to wilful blindness and infidelity! 4. Christ's reply. Because they denied and opposed the truth against their own knowledge, He refuses to give them any further answer. Take heed of this wilful contempt and opposition of the known truth, lest for it God do justly leave us in ignorance; yea, give us up to further blindness, to be hardened in it, as He may justly do. On the contrary, labour not only to know the truth and doctrine of God out of His Word, but especially to entertain the love of it in our hearts, that we may embrace it and yield obedience to it.—*G. Petter.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 27-33. *Christ and the Temple authorities.*—1. Where the action is unquestionably right some will censure the agent. 2. They who require reasons should be ready to give reasons. 3. Truth should be the first question with men, not consequences. 4. Incompetency may be exposed and assumption resisted for the sake of truth.—*J. H. Godwin.*

*The mutual bearing of Christ and His enemies.*—With evil intent they open fire. A brief "yes or no" style of reply may do great injustice to righteousness. They would be greatly pleased therewith. But they were dealing with One who had the wisdom of the serpent as well as the harmlessness of the dove. And so without needlessly rousing wrath, impeding work, or compromising truth, God's glory and the welfare of men in all ages are subserved by the replies which came promptly and steadily back to their astonished ears.

He did not deem it a duty to always answer questions directly and without reserve. The gates were not to be thrown wide open at the beck of every foe. Source, motive, and result were considered, and the nature of His replies gauged accordingly. In this instance He defeated their purpose in seeking whereof they might accuse Him. But He at the same time let them know that both the fact and source of what they sought were good and true. His refusal to respond to their liking arose not from fear of frank statement or of maintaining it. Let them answer a plain question and He would. Fair play. They would thus shew themselves worthy of an explicit reply by their own readiness to do the same. But whether answered or not, they found themselves handicapped by their insincerity as well as moral and physical cowardice. Had they been true men they would not have gotten there.



Their capacity to decide on His credentials, their honesty, their courage, were all at stake. It was the presentation of a dilemma, the grasping of either horn of which would defeat them. Among the evils they made a lame effort to select the least. By avoiding a blunt refusal He prevented the needlessly premature loss of temper and its consequences. Without this self-command and wisdom, by undue exasperation, a crisis might be hastened. "His hour was not yet come." But how could they help realising that, by such a question, He knew what was in them? How could they help knowing that the knowledge implied by His questions had Divinity back of it? How could they help concluding that Divinity carried with it that authority which they were insincerely seeking to find out? It is His turn now. He questions. They soon stand self-condemned in the light of their own admissions.—*Wm. M. Campbell.*

*Wilful blindness and its retributive judgment.*—Had they been true to their office or to themselves, they needed not to have asked this question. They had possessed long since abundant means of knowing the Divine authority both of the Lord's ministry and of John's baptism. But their carnal passions prevented them from acknowledging the first; while their cowardly fears, the offspring of a bad conscience, brought them into a dilemma respecting the last. Do we see nothing like this among ourselves? Received truths are disputed; things certain are treated as uncertainties; old objections, often refuted, are revived; questions are raised where the clearest light and evidence have long supplied an answer adequate to the conviction of every honest mind: but men refuse to be convinced; they harden themselves in error; because of their lusts they "love to have it so"; while some even venture to hope that their supposed inability to believe, which is their condemnation, will serve as an extenuation of their general guilt at the Last Day. How awful in these

respects are the warnings of the Lord! See John xii. 35; Matt. xiii. 12; Luke xi. 35.—*J. Ford.*

*The rejection of authority.*—Those who find themselves vanquished by truth generally endeavour to reject authority. There are no persons more forward to demand of others a reason for their actions than those who think they may do everything themselves without control. Blind priests! who see not the finger of God nor His Divine authority in the visible and innumerable miracles of Christ, which plainly authorise His mission and His conduct, and evidently prove His Divinity. Ignorant scribes! who talk of nothing but the Scriptures and the law, and yet do not perceive in Christ the author and the perfection, the end and accomplishment, the spirit and the truth of the law, as all the Scriptures declare Him to be.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 28. *The calling of ministers in the Church.*—1. Reasons why none ought to take upon him this public office or function in the Church without a lawful calling. (1) Because without such a calling he cannot be assured that God will assist him and strengthen him to do the duties of his calling. (2) He cannot expect or look for the blessing of God upon that which he doth in execution of his office, and so he cannot with comfort go on in it. (3) Neither can he be assured of God's protection in his calling, that God will maintain and keep him against all enemies and dangers. 2. There is a twofold calling of every one who takes upon him this public office in the Church. (1) An inward calling from God and in his own conscience, whereby he must know and be assured in himself that God has endued him in some measure with such gifts and graces as are requisite to make him able and fit to execute that office and function, together with a willing and ready mind and conscience to use those gifts to the glory of God and good of the Church. (2) An outward calling from men

also, being approved and allowed of by such as are in authority in the Church, to execute the office he takes upon him.—*G. Petter.*

Vers. 29, 30. *Christ's appeal to the testimony of the Baptist.*—As His words are generally understood, they would have amounted only to silencing His questioners, and that in a manner which would, under ordinary circumstances, be scarcely regarded as either fair or ingenuous. It would have been simply to turn the question against themselves, and so in turn to raise popular prejudice. But the Lord's words meant quite other. He *did* answer their question, though He also exposed the cunning and cowardice which prompted it. To the challenge for His authority, and the dark hint about Satanic agency, He replied by an appeal to the Baptist. He had borne full witness to the mission of Christ from the Father, and "all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed." Were they satisfied? What was their view of the Baptism in preparation for the Coming of Christ? They would not, or could not, answer! If they said the Baptist was a prophet, this implied not only the authorisation of the mission of Jesus, but the call to believe on Him. On the other hand, they were afraid publicly to disown John! And so their cunning and cowardice stood out self-condemned, when they pleaded ignorance—a plea so grossly and manifestly dishonest, that Christ, having given what all must have felt to be a complete answer, could refuse further discussion with them on this point.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

Ver. 32. *A prophet is one who, standing in the foreground of God, announces on Divine impulse and with Divine power truths unveiled to his spiritual perception.* These truths, often significant of salvation, it is his office to report for the welfare of the community. He receives them in his

own higher spirit, unto which, as to, an observatory of heavenly visions, his life for a season withdraws itself, and where, shrinking from all contact with externals, it becomes "a seeing eye, a hearing ear, a perceiving sense" for the things of eternity or of the future. What the prophet thus receives in the sanctuary of his spirit or meeting-place of the two worlds that he *announces through the medium of the subordinate mind and its outflowing speech*: for in the prophetic ecstasy the three constituents of the spirit-nature, νοῦς and λόγος and πνεῦμα, continue in unbroken communication with each other. If he be a seer, he contemplates that which is seen, not as it is in itself, but as it comes to view in a symbol: this symbol is Divinely formed for the purpose, and often accommodated to the man's natural bent or educational mode of thought, being chiefly framed out of materials found in his subjectivity. The prophet is not, indeed, like the subject of the *mystic* ecstasy, rapt or caught up to the confines of the third heaven or blissfully translated into the paradise of God; but from the reciprocal immanence of the human spirit and of the Divine there arise manifestations to his mind in a clothing or colouring borrowed from his individual nature. The super-sensuous, which he is permitted to behold, passes immediately through his own νοῦς into λόγος, and thus in the form of speech travelling through his mouth out of himself enters the ears and the νοῦς of the listening congregation, and so becomes *intelligible* and therefore *profitable* to the assembled Church.—*Prof. T. S. Evans.*

Ver. 33. *Christ discovers not Himself to hypocrites.*—That man is altogether unworthy of the truth who seeks it only to oppose it. It is to no manner of purpose to dispute and reason with those who study only how to ensnare in their discourse, and to take advantage of everything against truth. Such persons shew plainly what con-

cern they have for truth when they make use of lies and forgeries to oppress it. Humility does not oblige any one to give an account of his conduct to all sorts of persons, nor at

all times, nor in all circumstances, but only to be ready to do it whenever the glory of God and the benefit of his neighbour require it.—*P. Quesnel.*

## ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 3. *God's need of all.*—In a strange place, where few travellers ever go, there is a wonderful bridge, underneath which the trains stop for the collection of passenger-tickets. There may be nothing remarkable in this; but as the traveller looks up he sees that which strikes him as indeed a peculiarity, if nothing more; it is that the granite stones of which this long and massive bridge is built have each one of them been numbered. The large blocks that lay at the bottom supporting the whole structure have their number. The medium-sized ones that hold the great work together have theirs, and the very smallest have theirs—all to fill their parts in the great structure which so truly completes the perfect work. There was need for all of them. So we are taught by this earthly monument of man's genius the spiritual lessons of life. God, the Great Architect of the universe, the Master Builder of all things, and the Creator of all life, has need of every creature here below, that it may have its use for God's glory. All creatures bow before God as He comes to them to draw them to their use for His purposes in the world, and, in their willingness to be so dealt with, teach us the very first lesson of life—submission to His holy will in *all things*.

Ver. 8. *A triumphal procession.*—At the conclusion of the Franco-German War, in the course of which Napoleon III. became a captive and was dethroned, the victorious German troops made their triumphal entry into Berlin on June 16th, 1871, which is thus described in a newspaper of the time: "On each side of the way were placed gilt pedestals, and between each pedestal hung a festoon of laurel and fir. After the flags come the Guards. They are covered with laurel and fir. The altars and cannons are covered with leaves and with branches of fir trees."

Vers. 9, 10. *A deliverer hailed.*—Perhaps there is no episode recorded in history more interesting than that of Charles V. when he landed at Tunis. Ten thousand men and women who were slaves within the city, when they heard the approach of their deliverer, rose and broke their chains, and rushed towards the gate as the emperor was entering the town; and this mighty procession knelt down, hailed him as their deliverer, and prayed God to bless him.

*Slight value of popular demonstrations.*—When Napoleon was returning from his successful wars in Austria and Italy, amid the huzzas of the people, Bourrienne remarked to him that "it must be delightful to be greeted with such demonstrations of enthusiastic admiration." "Bah!" replied Napoleon, "this same unthinking crowd, under a slight change of circumstances, would follow me just as eagerly to the scaffold."

Vers. 13, 14. *Christ's search for fruit.*—When He comes He will turn up our leaves; and look that, like the tree of life (Rev. xxii. 21), we bear fruit every month, or that we be like the lemon tree, which ever and anon sendeth forth new lemons as soon as the former are fallen down with ripeness; or the Egyptian fig tree, which, saith Solinus, beareth fruit seven times a year—pull off a fig and another breaks forth in the place shortly after.—*J. Trapp.*

Vers. 15-17. *Traffic in holy places.*—Descriptions left us of what used to take place in the great cathedrals of Europe—the commercial bustle, the exchange and barter, the hiring of servants, the transit of heavy market-produce, which went on familiarly in our own St. Paul's less than three centuries ago—may help us to realise the state of matters suggested by these pregnant words.

*Rebuke of irreverence.*—When Walter Hook (Dean) was vicar of Coventry, he was once presiding at a vestry meeting which was so largely attended as to necessitate an adjournment to the church. Several persons kept their hats on. The vicar requested them to take them off, but they refused. "Very well, gentlemen," he replied; "but remember that in *this* house the insult is not done to me, but to your God." And the hats were immediately taken off.

Ver. 22. *"Have faith in God."*—There is something very interesting in looking at one of those triumphs of human ingenuity like the clock in Strasburg Cathedral, which tells not only the hours of the day, but shews all the motions of the moon and planets, foretells the eclipses, takes account of "leap year," and performs a multitude of other curious manifestations of thought and contrivance. Could any one be so foolish as to doubt the power of its maker to alter some



particular portion of its works? And yet why will men doubt the power of God, or refuse to permit Him to act as He sees fit? The laws of nature are His servants, and God is not the slave of His own rules.

*Filial confidence.*—The celebrated preacher Cecil once bade his little daughter cast a favourite necklace into the fire at his simple request. With tears in her eyes the child obeyed, and the next day her father brought her a jewel of far more value, and explained to her how God rewards the faith of those who trust in His wisdom and love.

Ver. 23. "*This mountain.*"—We find in the prophetic writings the expressions, "The Mountain of the House of the Lord," "The Mountain of the Lord's House," "The Holy Mountain"; and thus we may apply the epithet to the Temple of Jerusalem, with its noble buildings and golden roof, standing on the rocky heights of Mount Moriah. Perhaps our Lord, by some glance or gesture, made this meaning plain. The Mountain of the Lord's House, the grand Sanctuary of ancient Israel, was the very sign and figure of the Old Dispensation, which was in its character concentrated, local, and centralised—one God, one nation, one Temple, one law. But Jesus Christ came to alter and change, to widen and enlarge the Covenant of Grace, to unlock the gates of mercy, to welcome in the wanderers, to stretch out the cords of the Heavenly Tabernacle, so that all nations might enter in, to break down the wall of partition, and to make His organisation, the Catholic Church, embrace all nations and kindreds and people. This great change He declares in prophetic words. This Mountain was to be removed, this Jewish religion was to be transferred from its local home on the rocky height of Jerusalem, and it was to be cast "into the sea." "The sea," in the language of prophetic symbols, means the nations, the Gentiles, the various races of men. Our Lord's words were fulfilled when, under Divine inspiration, St. Peter baptised the Roman Cornelius and his family; when St. Paul said, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles"; when St. James gave sentence, "Trouble not the Gentiles which believe, with the Mosaic restrictions."—*Dr. Hardman.*

*Stages of faith.*—We are told that a piece of iron probably becomes a magnet by a sort of polarised arrangement of its molecules, but that this polarised or magnetised condition cannot be maintained at very high temperatures. Now it is observed that if a magnet is put into the fire it heats to redness like any other piece of iron, but that when it has reached a certain temperature, though still in the fire, it grows almost suddenly less red and less hot, after which it gradually regains its heat and redness, and goes forward to whiteness, and melting

like any other piece of iron; but it is no longer a magnet. An internal and invisible alteration in its own structure has taken place, and the expenditure of energy upon the change in its own molecular constitution, in the process of being demagnetised, has been such as not merely to arrest its progressive heating, but more or less to chill it in the midst of the fire. Yet it is true that the magnet could not have become white hot without passing through this constitutional change, and what appeared like retrogression was really a necessary stage of progress. Is not this in very striking analogy with what happens in the history of many a soul? and if so, is not doubt in those souls a stage in the growth of faith?

*Prayer and the laws of nature.*—Our faith is, that God hears His creatures' prayers, as to everything which concerns their well-being, and specifically as to those changes, upon which even life so often depends, as it is good for us. Now neither science nor theology has any right to set these two beliefs in contradiction to each other. They can be harmonised. Professor Tyndall's argument, that the fixity of laws precludes God's hearing our prayers in this respect, would, if pressed (as he doubtless would not press it) equally militate against any belief in God's providence. For those who believe in God's providence must believe that those fixed laws (if they exist) were adapted in their marvellous variations, or at least in some of their more striking coincidences, to the moral condition of moral agents. All Europe was electrified by the shock of that terrific Russian winter which destroyed the great army of Napoleon I. If the laws upon which that extreme cold depended were laws fixed (as Professor Tyndall must hold) in all eternity, then, if we believe in God's providence, we must believe that God, in all eternity, adapted them to that end in His moral government which they subserved, whatever that end was. And if those fixed laws (supposing them to exist) could be adapted to that act of Napoleon I. which they served to chasten, although Napoleon was free to invade Russia or not to invade it, then equally the same fixed laws (if they exist) may be so adapted in all eternity to our foreseen moral condition, that any other scourges which (like the cholera, plague, locusts) are brought upon man for his moral discipline, without violation of those laws, may equally, without violation of those laws, be, on man's repentant prayer, removed. The adaptation of the supposed fixed laws, to our praying or not praying, our repenting or not repenting, has no other difficulty than their adaptation to any other part of our moral character which is equally free.

—*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*

*God's control of nature.*—There is a re-

markable note in Darwin's *Botanic Garden* (Canto iv., l. 320), in which the author conjectures that changes of wind may depend on some minute chemical cause, which, if it were discovered, might probably, like other chemical causes, be governed by human agency. Whatever may be thought of the probability of this anticipation being realised, it is at least sufficient to suggest one reflexion. If atmospheric changes may conceivably, without any violation of natural law, be brought under the control of man, may they not now, equally without violation of natural law, be under the control of God? And are we so fully informed of the manner of God's working with regard to these contingent phenomena of nature, as to know for certain that He can never exercise such a control for purposes connected with His moral government?—*Dean Mansel.*

Vers. 25, 26. *Necessity of forgiving spirit.*—In the Middle Ages, when the lords and knights were always at war with each other, one of them resolved to revenge himself on a neighbour who had offended him. It chanced that, on the very evening when he had made this resolution, he heard that his enemy was to pass near his castle, with only a very few men with him. It was a good opportunity to take his revenge, and he determined not to let it pass. He spoke of his plan in the presence of his chaplain, who tried in vain to persuade him to give it up. The good man said a great deal to the duke about the sin of what he was going to do, but in vain. At length, seeing that all his words had no effect, he said, "My lord, since I cannot persuade you to give up this plan of yours, you will at least come with me to the chapel, that we may pray together before you go." The duke consented, and the chaplain and he kneeled together in prayer. Then the mercy-loving Christian said to the revengeful warrior, "Will you repeat after me, sentence by sentence, the prayer which our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught to His disciples?" "I will do it," replied the duke. He did it accordingly. The chaplain said a sentence, and the duke repeated it, till he came to the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." There the duke was silent. "My lord duke, you are silent," said the chaplain. "Will you be so good as to continue to repeat the words after me, if you dare to do so: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us'?" "I cannot," replied the duke. "Well, God cannot forgive you, for He has said so. He Himself has given us

this prayer. Therefore you must either give up your revenge or give up saying this prayer; for to ask God to pardon you *as you pardon others* is to ask Him to take vengeance on you for all your sins. Go now, my lord, and meet your victim. God will meet you at the great day of judgment." The iron will of the duke was broken. "No," said he, "I will finish my prayer. My God, my Father, pardon me; forgive me as I desire to forgive him who has offended me; 'lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.'" "Amen," said the chaplain. "Amen," repeated the duke, who now understood the Lord's Prayer better than he had ever done before, since he had learned to apply it to himself.

*Christian treatment of enemies.*—A poor widow, who was a washerwoman, partly depended for support upon the produce of her garden. In it was a peach tree, the fruit of which was coveted by some boys of the village. Accordingly one night they entered the garden to rob the tree. The widow had, however, made a timely gathering of her fruit that day. In revenge for their disappointment the wicked lads turned some swine into the garden, who by morning had wrought havoc among the poor woman's vegetables, and made her suffer in consequence through the winter. In looking at the desolation she picked up a knife with a name engraved on the handle. It was the name of a village boy whom she knew, and whom she thus recognised as the cause of her loss. However, nothing was said about the matter. During the ensuing months a revival took place in the village in question, and among those who became convicted of sin was the owner of the knife. Becoming converted, he obeyed his conscience by going to the widow and confessing the wrong he had done her. Thereupon she told him she had long known it, and shewed him his knife. "But why did you not inform upon me, and make me pay the damage?" he asked. "There was a more excellent way," she said; "I took that." "What was it?" asked the lad. "To pray for you, in accordance with the Master's directions." So the widow had her revenge.

*Christian feeling towards enemies.*—At Tamatave, on the eve of the bombardment (by the French), all the natives, from the governor downwards, were at a prayer-meeting, and "there were no prayers for the lives of their enemies, and no cries for vengeance upon them. Prayers for a righteous vindication, for guidance, for faith to trust where they could not see, and for eventual peace and goodwill, were the only petitions."

## CHAPTER XII.

## CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **A place for the winefat.**—Simply a *winepress*; or (more exactly) *winevat*, i.e. the receptacle under the winepress proper. Probably *ὀπλῆριον* is here used to denote the whole apparatus, which was often hollowed out of a sloping rock. **A tower.**—A stone building some twenty feet high, with a flat roof, where a sentinel was posted to protect the vineyard from depredators. It would also serve as a residence during the vintage season. **Into a far country.**—Too strong: ἀπεδήμησε is just *went from home*.

Ver. 4. See R.V.

Ver. 6. Most pathetically put in the original: *There was yet one he possessed, a son beloved; he sent him last to visit them, saying, They will feel ashamed of themselves in presence of my son.*

Ver. 13. **To catch Him in His words.**—The chief priests and scribes and elders having signally failed in their last attempt (chap. xi. 27-33), now send a band of Pharisees and Herodians, in the hope that they may be able to *entangle and ensnare Him in an argument*.

Ver. 19. "The statute must be regarded as relative to some exceedingly offensive matrimonial condition which had prevailed, probably polyandry. When such a custom has unhappily got ingrained in the habits of a degraded people, it is not possible to induce them to leap, at a bound, to a lofty pinnacle of marital purity. The ascent must be gradual; the utmost that can be achieved by progressive legislators is to take one step at a time." See Dr. J. Morison's note *in loco*, from which the above is quoted.

Ver. 24. **Do ye not therefore err.**—*Is it not on this account that ye wander in a maze, because . . .* Instead of accusing them point-blank of error, and so alienating them still farther, our Lord deals with them as if they had come in good faith to have a difficulty solved; and He at once points them to the true source of their pretended perplexity—ignorance of the Scriptures.

Ver. 26. See R.V.

Ver. 28. The scribe's question was—*Of what nature is the first commandment of all?* Has it to do, that is, with Sabbath observance, or with circumcision, or with sacrificial rites—or what?

Ver. 30. Note the prep. ἐξ, before "heart," "soul," "mind," "strength." *The whole of man's complex being is to go out in love to God.* "The measure of our love to God is to love Him without measure."

Ver. 32. *Finely* (answered)! *Teacher, Thou hast spoken from (the standpoint of) truth, for He is one,* etc. This seems to suit both text and context better than R.V. rendering.

Ver. 34. **Discreetly.**—With *voûs* or discernment—"having his wits about him," as we say.

Ver. 35. **Jesus answered.**—For the earlier part of the conversation see Matt. xxii. 41, 42.

Ver. 39. **Uppermost rooms at feasts.**—*Chief places in the suppers*—the most important meal of the day, and the most fashionable entertainment.

Ver. 40. **Greater damnation.**—*A heavier sentence or doom* than that awaiting other sinners. Christ always denounces the hypocrite as a villain of double dye.

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—12.

## (PARALLELS: MATT. xxi. 33-41; LUKE xx. 9-18.)

*The husbandmen and the vineyard.*—In this parable our Lord seeks to convince the Jews of the sinful state of the nation, and to warn them of the terrible judgments they were bringing on themselves. These features will be dwelt on more fully in the next Outline; the following more general lessons may be enforced here.

I. **This parable condemns injustice between man and man.**—It assumes that a man has a right in that which belongs to him, and exposes the wickedness of those who attempt to take the law into their own hands. It goes dead against such teaching as has led to bloodshed and misery in Ireland, and can only result in ruin wherever it is put in practice.

II. **This parable enforces solemn spiritual lessons.**—1. We are not our own



(1 Cor. vi. 10, 20). The soul is a vineyard, and we have no right to neglect or misuse it. Every talent entrusted to us must be employed for the glory of God, and in obedience to His commands. 2. The Lord of the vineyard has afforded us every opportunity for right cultivation, and He expects us to render a due return. "No man is elected to any advantage over his fellows for his own sake or enjoyment. He is rather in the position of one to whom finer and more powerful instruments are given, that by their possession he may be the servant of all the rest." 3. Obedience must be the voluntary submission of our free choice; and God will not be satisfied without this.

*The Stone which the builders rejected.*—Those whom our Lord addressed had not only "read this scripture," but had been accustomed to apply it to the proper person—not David himself, but David's Son and Lord, the Messiah. So that here, as elsewhere, Christ covertly takes to Himself that office and dignity which, out of consideration for their prejudices, He forbore openly to assume. After His ascension, when there was no longer any reason for reserve, His apostles affirmed the same truth in the plainest terms (Acts iv. 10, 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7).

**I. The rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jewish nation.**—They were "the builders," a people specially set apart to preserve the knowledge of God in the world. This they had done—carried up the structure to a certain height above the ground, as far as their materials would go. But now, on there being presented to them a Stone, a chief Corner-stone, just what they required to complete the edifice, they cast it aside with derision and contempt. And in so doing they unwittingly fulfilled prophecy (Acts xiii. 27).

**II. The exaltation of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding their rejection.**—We cannot, like Stephen, see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. But we may behold the visible kingdom and Church of Christ, as it was instituted at Jerusalem immediately after His ascension, and continues to this day. We may trace the marvellous progress of this institution in the pages of the inspired narrative, so far as that narrative extends. Proceeding onwards, we may view "the kingdoms of this world," one after another, "becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ," and the religion of the Crucified firmly established and consolidated in the world.

**III. The Divine agency to which this is to be ascribed.**—From whom, if not from God, could a work so truly Divine, so far surpassing all human powers and conceptions, proceed? 1. Consider it as a gift (Jas. i. 17; Rom. vi. 23; John iii. 16). 2. Consider it as a signal defeat and disconcerting of the counsels of men (Ps. xxxiii. 10; Job v. 13; Ps. lxxvi. 10). 3. Consider it as still proceeding, and recognise "the Lord's doing" both in the rejection and the reception of Jesus Christ, and of the doctrine which He brought down from heaven, and sealed with His blood.—*F. Field, LL.D.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *God's care for Israel.*—Canaan was a vineyard enclosed (Exod. xv. 17; Ps. xlv. 2; Neh. ix. 23-25; Ps. lxxx. 8-11). Lines of demarcation were laid down between the people of Israel and the surrounding nations, partly because the idolatries practised by those nations were so defiling and

infectious that even the chosen nation could not be trusted to mingle with them on free terms. They were forbidden to intermarry with other people. Moreover they were isolated by their geographical position: the desert of Paran bounded their southern states; the Mediterranean Sea, the

west; the rugged mountains of Lebanon, the north; and their eastern frontier was a water boundary. A vineyard required unceasing care and attention; so every facility was furnished the children of Israel to become a nation of saints.—*J. H. Morgan.*

*The soul, God's vineyard.*—The soul, according to one figurative sense of this parable, is the vineyard of God. When He created it, He planted it; He set a hedge about it, which is that of His commandments. The winepress is the representative sacrifice which causes the blood of Christ to flow into it. The tower is the Church, the house of prayer, in which the soul, being raised from the earth, is secure from its enemies, and finds in the Word of God arms strong enough to overcome them. Our soul is not our own: God, who is the creator, is likewise the proprietor of it. We hold it of Him, as it were, by lease, only that we may cultivate it, and render to Him the fruits which it is capable of producing by His grace. Let us take great care that we be not found, either not having any at all, or claiming the property of them to ourselves.—*P. Quesnel.*

Vers. 3-9. *The wicked husbandmen.*—1. Injustice to men results from unfaithfulness to God. 2. The wicked expect to profit by the removal of the righteous. 3. What is good passes from those who will not use it to those who will. 4. Those most honoured by God have not been most honoured by men.—*J. H. Godwin.*

*The form of this parable.*—At most this parable is but an old theme worked up with new variations. Every one who heard it knew what the vineyard with its hedge, winepress, and tower signified, and who the vine-dressers were, and who the servants sent for the fruits. These phrases belonged to the established religious dialect of Israel as much as the words pastor, flock, lambs of the flock, Zion, etc., do to ours, used by us all without

consciousness that we are speaking in figures. In adopting this form of presentation, therefore, Jesus was not so much speaking in parables as using the recognised authority of written prophecy against His opponents, a most appropriate procedure when the question at issue respected His personal authority.—*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*

*The design of this parable.*—The design is to signalise the contrast between the spirit of the owner and that of the men to whom the vineyard was entrusted. The owner has an eye to fruit; the details depicting the construction of the vineyard all point towards fruit as the chief end, and they are enumerated for no other reason. There is a hedge, that the vines may not be spoiled by wild beasts; a press and vat, that the grapes may be squeezed and the juice preserved; a tower, that the ripe fruit may not be stolen. The didactic significance of these particulars is not, as in the original form of the allegory in Isaiah, that all has been done that could be done for the vineyard, so as to make the owner free from blame, but that all has been done with one object in view, viz. the production of fruit. In keeping with this emphasising of fruitfulness as the reason of the existence of the vineyard fully equipped for the purpose, is the reiterated persistent demand for the fruit when the season came round, as also the intimation of the owner's purpose, on conclusively ascertaining that no fruit was to be forthcoming, to entrust his vineyard to others. On the other hand, what was the temper of the vinedressers? Was it that of men who wished to keep the fruit to themselves instead of giving it to the owner? No; but rather that of men who never thought of fruit, but only of the honour and privilege of being entrusted with the keeping of the vineyard. They were triflers, men utterly devoid of earnestness, and the practical purpose of the property committed to their charge they habitually forgot. The hedge and the press

and the tower might as well not have been there. When the servants came for the fruit they were simply surprised. "Fruit, did you say? we have occupied the position of vinedressers, and duly drawn our wages: what more do you want?" Such was the actual fact in regard to the spiritual heads of Israel. They had been entrusted with a valuable institution—an elect nation furnished with good laws, and meant to be a holy nation, a people to God's praise. And speaking generally, they had lost sight of the end of Israel's calling, and had made no use of the means provided for its attainment. They had occupied their position for their own glory; taken pay and done no work. They had committed the sin to which privileged classes have ever been prone—that of thinking only of privilege, and forgetting duty.—*Ibid.*

*Application of this parable to Christians.*—A rich vineyard, planted and fenced, is let out to us by the Divine Owner. The Bible, the Church, and the ministry have been provided and preserved for us. These blessings are not ours by right; we are tenants at will. We cannot truly enjoy the produce of the vineyard unless we reserve a portion for the owner. Those fruits enrich us most when returned to the Giver. They cannot be presented directly to Him, but they are made payable to the poor and His ministers. His Son has come to claim them, and is now waiting for our supreme reverence, trust, and love. "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh."—*J. H. Morgan.*

Ver. 6. *The treatment due to Christ from sinners.*—It might have been presumed that sinners would treat Christ kindly, from—1. The Divinity and glory of His nature. 2. The perfect excellence of His character. 3. The reasonableness of His claims. 4. The goodness of His intentions. 5. His known ability to save. 6. His power to destroy. 7. Their own necessities. One might sooner expect

a beggar to spurn a palace, or a dying man to refuse the touch that would bring him life and health.

*The Mission of the Son.*—As He reached this point of the parable we may well believe that a thrill of blended joy and horror shot through the heart of Him who spake as never man spake, and loved as never man loved. For now He has to speak of Himself, and of His Father's grace as shewn in and through Him. *There was yet one, a well-beloved Son;* and He last of all was sent by the all-enduring Lord of all. Must not His whole being have thrilled with deep and sacred joy at the thought that His Father loved Him, loved Him well and much, loved Him most of all for the love which prompted Him to lay down His life for the sinful race which hated and rejected Him? Amid all the sorrow and darkness which confronted Him, must He not have been consoled and upheld by the conviction that the God who had spoken to men in sundry fragments and divers ways by the prophets in times gone by, was now speaking to them by the Son whom He had "appointed heir of all things," and was about to reveal to them the very fulness of His grace, His kindness and philanthropy—that even the death of the Cross was ordained by His Father, and was part of the plan by which He would yet draw all men unto Himself? And yet, as He turned from God to men, as the thought of His rejection, of all He had suffered and was still to suffer at the hands of these lawless upholders of law, must He not have been profoundly appalled by the sense of that guilt which He came to take away? He had long and often spoken of His death to His disciples, striving to prepare them for it; but now, for the first time, He predicts His rejection and death to the people at large, and in especial charges the rulers and priests, who had already in secret council conspired to put Him to death, with the guilt, with "the deep damnation of His taking-off." If they could



He could not, face that guilt unmoved; and as He put into the mouths of those wicked husbandmen the words, "This is the heir; come, and let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours"—if the priestly rulers (who, to keep their "place," had determined to murder Him)—if they started as at the voice of an accusing and impersonated conscience, to which all their guilty secrets were known, how must He, who loved even them, have been grieved and appalled at a wickedness so stiff-necked and stupendous as theirs!—*S. Cox, D.D.*

Ver. 7. *The Son known and rejected.*

—1. Jesus claims to be the Heir of God. In acting for God He acts for Himself. It is nature and relationship, not mere official dignity, that underlies this title and that is implied in the parable. 2. Jesus implies that this was known by these Jewish leaders. Their condemnation was, that, knowing Him to be the Son of God, they slew Him. They had a conviction that Jesus was the Christ, but they would not let their mind dwell upon it. There are thousands who have a haunting suspicion that Jesus deserves a very different kind of recognition from that which they give Him.—*M. Dods, D.D.*

*Denial in spite of conviction.*—

Beneath many an obstinate denial of Him lies a secret confession or misgiving, which is more truly the man than the loud negation. And such strange contradictions are men, that the secret conviction is often the very thing which gives bitterness and eagerness to the hostility.—*A. MacLaren, D.D.*

*"The inheritance shall be ours."*—

Fatal mistake! The inheritance was theirs, and in slaying the Heir they cast themselves out of it.—*Prof. F. J. A. Hort.*

Vers. 10, 11. *The rejected Stone.*—

The psalmist, in these two verses, is held to have referred to an incident in the building or in the rebuilding of the Temple. A stone which after

examination the builders had rejected and cast aside as unworthy of a place in the foundation, had proved, when re-examined, to be of such noble quality that it was used as a corner-stone in the cornice, at an angle where two walls met, and was thus exalted to a conspicuous place of honour. Such a reversal of skilled human judgment was held to be the Lord's doing, a marvel which called for admiration and praise. As it was with the rejected stone, Jesus implies, so will it be with the rejected Son. "You priests and rulers have rejected Me; you are about, as you think, to cover Me with shame and dishonour; but God is laughing at you, and at the shallow cunning you mistake for policy and wisdom: He will have you in derision; He will lift His despised and rejected Son into a place so lofty and honourable as that all the world may see Him, and praise the God who has exalted Him."—*S. Cox, D.D.*

*God's truth overcoming human opposition.*—It is very remarkable how often this has been repeated in the history of the Church—how great religious movements have been frowned down, if not actively opposed, by those in high places, which have afterwards subdued all opposition. In our own times, in this very century, this has occurred twice. First, the great evangelical movement in the Church of England was set at naught by the builders, though it was the assertion of the primary truth of personal religion—that each soul must have a personal apprehension of Christ, and look to Him with the eye of a living faith; and then the great Church movement was almost unanimously rejected by the bishops between 1840 and 1850, though it was the assertion of the truths patent through all the New Testament, that the Church, though a visible organisation, is the mystical body of Christ—that it is a supernatural system of grace, and that its sacraments are the signs of grace actually given in and with the outward sign. In neither of these cases did "the builders" discern the strength of

the principles asserted, and foresee that they must win their way, though the formularies of the Church, of which these builders were the exponents and guardians, assert very unmistakably both these truths in conjunction, viz. spiritual apprehension of Christ, and sacramental union in His body.—*M. F. Sadler.*

*Christ is to His Church a stone,* which is solid by His immortality, white by His purity,—a principal one, as being her Head; a foundation-stone, as Author and Finisher of the faith; and a corner-stone, as being the band and union of all His members. They whose business it is to build the spiritual edifice are sometimes so unhappy as to reject the most lively and excellent stones. But God will certainly take care to reserve them their proper place, and to put them into the building.—*P. Quesnel.*

*Ver. 12. Reproof should be welcomed.*—Men almost instinctively resent reproof; they do not like plain truths about themselves. Light hurts weak eyes; honey burns sore throats. Lais, the Corinthian beauty, broke her mirror because it shewed her wrinkles. This is foolish. I ought to be grateful to any who help me to know myself. When I remember how I shrink from reproofing another, I ought to feel deeply indebted to the man who has brought himself to the point of reproofing me. Some one has said that no man can be perfect without either a watchful enemy or a faithful friend. Let us value the faithful friend. He may not tickle our vanity, as does the honey-tongued flatterer, who, like Vitellius, worshipped Jehovah at Jerusalem and Caligula at Rome; but he will make us stronger and purer.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—17.

(PARALLELS: MATT xxii. 15-22; LUKE xx. 19-26.)

*Question as to tribute money.*—One part of the business of a teacher of Divine truth is to be ready to resolve doubtful cases submitted to him relating to duty and conscience. Especially a teacher professing to come with a message straight from God to men would be regarded as a kind of living oracle, at whose mouth any one who had a question to propose might seek a solution of it. There are, however, two conditions which such a teacher might reasonably demand from those who came to consult him: first, that he should not be appealed to in mere private matters and personal differences, which might be settled by the proper tribunals (Luke xii. 13, 14); and, secondly, that there should be, on the part of the questioner, a sincere desire to know what is right that he may choose it, and to learn the will of God that he may do it. It was in this latter qualification that the inquirers we are at present concerned with were deficient.

**I. A foul plot.**—"The chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders" (Mark xi. 27), being afraid, after their signal defeat, to enter the lists with Jesus any more, now "send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and Herodians, to catch Him in His words." 1. They doubtless thought this a very clever move, and congratulated one another upon the secrecy with which their arrangements had been made. But somebody had gained admittance into their counsel who was not of it. Let the plotters of mischief and those who take counsel together against the innocent know this assuredly: that there is nothing hidden from the Lord; that when every precaution has been taken, and every possibility of human treachery guarded against, "a bird of the air shall carry the voice," etc. (Eccles. x. 20). 2. Christ's enemies were constantly holding secret meetings to devise His ruin. It required many a midnight conclave, many a sitting with closed doors, to hatch the foul plot which ended

in His death. But now all those things which were spoken in the ear in closets are proclaimed upon the housetops. 3. The object of the present plot was "to catch Him in His words." They could not have employed a more likely device. Nothing is easier than to entrap a person of a frank, unsuspecting, straightforward character into saying something which may artfully be turned to his prejudice. God's saints in all ages have been persecuted in this way (Ps. lvi. 5, 6; Isa. xxix. 21).

**II. An insidious compliment.**—1. "A man that flattereth his neighbour," etc. (Prov. xxix. 5). So these hypocrites, designing to entrap Christ, try to put Him off His guard by a compliment to His character. 2. With many persons this ruse would have succeeded. There is a class of men who pride themselves on speaking the truth, regardless of consequences; whence it often happens that to the fear of being thought capable of fear they sacrifice that very truth which they profess to prize so highly. 3. To attempt to entangle Christ by so poor an artifice only shewed how far they were from knowing Him. He was certainly all that they said: He did "teach the way of God in truth"; He did "care for no man"; He did "regard not the person of men." But no more did He regard the *opinions* of men, or care for establishing such a character of Himself amongst men. And as for those who offered Him this incense, He knew that they "did but flatter Him with their lips, and dissemble in their double heart."

**III. A captious question.**—1. To understand the entangling nature of this question, we must remember the ambiguous condition of the Jews, as a nation, at this time. It was not independence, because they were under the military authority of a Roman governor; nor was it a state of absolute bondage, since they were allowed to retain their own laws and customs, and to exercise a certain judicial power through their high priest and Sanhedrin. It was, in fact, a condition of real subjection, with just such concessions as might soothe the wounded vanity of a fierce and high-spirited race. Observe how sensitive they were to any allusion to their lost liberties (John viii. 33). Now the most galling thing of all, and that which reminded them most painfully of their real condition, was the tribute. Caesar could afford to leave them a shew of liberty, but not to forego his taxes. The Jews, on their part, looked upon the payment of custom or tribute to a foreign power as an act of treason against Jehovah. They did pay it, but under protest because they could not help themselves. 2. The question now proposed to Christ by His enemies was one which, they judged, must receive from Him either an affirmative or a negative answer. If He should decide in the affirmative, He would be placing Himself in opposition to the almost universal feeling of the Jewish nation. It would be considered not only an unpatriotic but even a blasphemous decision, and as such would be fatal to His influence with the people. If, on the contrary, He should pronounce against the lawfulness of paying tribute, He could be handed over to the magistrate on a charge of sedition.

**IV. An ignominious defeat.**—1. "He, knowing their hypocrisy"—pretending to entertain conscientious scruples which they did not feel, and, while professing to seek advice, having no other object but to turn Christ's answer against Himself, whatever it might be—instead of giving a direct reply, desires to see the tribute money. And they bring him a denarius—a silver coin bearing on its face the head of Tiberius Caesar, the reigning emperor, with his name and title. 2. This proceeding of Christ's was well calculated to excite curiosity, and to keep His hearers in suspense. We can fancy we see the little circle of spectators drawing closer together, looking now upon the questioners, now upon the piece of money, now upon the lips of Him who was expected to break the silence. And He does so in the memorable words, "Render to Caesar," etc. 3. Christ



does not give a direct answer to the question asked. The question was, "Is it lawful?" not, Is it necessary? or, Is it expedient? but, "Is it *lawful* to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" This question could only be answered by shewing that there is nothing in such a payment inconsistent with the law of God, or with that allegiance which, as the people of God, they owed to a greater King than Cæsar. Christ neither shews this nor even asserts it. And why? Because that would have been to do the very thing they wanted, and to fall into the trap they had laid for Him. To a captious question He returns an evasive answer. They sought a handle against Him, and He gives them something they cannot lay hold of. His reply is so framed as neither to injure Him with the people nor to compromise Him with the magistrate. 4. Still the question remains—"Is it lawful," etc. To which a sufficient, though not a direct, answer may be gathered from Christ's action and words. For it is a general maxim that the money current in any country determines the power to which allegiance is due. When the Jews deluded themselves with the idea that they still preserved their independence as a nation, this Roman coin bore witness against them. When they boasted of being the people of God, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," they ought to have remembered that by God, the same God whom they acknowledged for their King, did other kings reign, and princes decree justice. "He changeth the times," etc. (Dan. ii. 21). At one time He had brought foreign princes against this very people to oppress them in their own land; at another He had caused them to be carried away captive to a land that was not theirs. And He had forewarned them of a time when "the sceptre" should finally "depart from Judah," etc. (Gen. xlix. 10). That time was now come. This very image and superscription, to those who read it aright, plainly declared so. While they were arguing and disputing whether it was lawful to pay or not, Cæsar's collectors were gathering in his taxes. This was a state of things which could not be mistaken. None but the wilfully blind could fail to see that to resist the power was, in this case, to resist the ordinance of God. 5. But, lest this rule of "rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," should appear to countenance the smallest violation of the sacred rights of conscience, we must remember that it is not the whole of Christ's answer. He goes on to give a second rule which guards and limits the first; or rather, the two together must be considered as a single rule, and so applied to every case of conduct. God has His rights, as well as Cæsar. There need not be any opposition or interference between the two; and there was none here. Should it be otherwise, should the things of Cæsar in any case be contrary to the things of God, no man can doubt which of these must give way. 6. Note, in conclusion, the comparative urgency with which these respective claims are enforced upon us. Cæsar is pressing and peremptory: God is gentle and persuasive. Cæsar listens to no appeal: God is pitiful and easy to be entreated. It is Cæsar's policy to put down resistance and disobedience at once, by the immediate punishment of the offender: it is God's principle to forbear and suffer long, "not willing that any should perish," etc. Such being the respective dispositions of these two powers, it needs little knowledge of human nature to tell which of them is more likely to obtain his due. As we look around, we observe that human laws, strictly enforced, are generally obeyed; while the most flagrant violations of the law of God, the most wanton denials of His claims, go unpunished, if not unregarded. Such being the case, it is surely incumbent on all who would see the things of Cæsar rendered to Cæsar, and unto God the things that are God's, to throw all their weight into the lighter scale. Cæsar needs no advocate; he will take care to get his own: but God depends, for the enforcement of *His* claims, upon the zeal and earnestness of those who advocate them.

OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 14. *Testimony of adversaries to Christ.*—That a man may speak freely the truth, he must have knowledge, zeal, boldness—all which Christ's adversaries ascribe to Him here. 1. Knowledge of the truth, in that He was a "master and taught the way of God." 2. Zeal and love to the truth, in that He was "true, teaching truly." 3. Boldness, in that He "respected not the person of any."—*Dean Boys.*

*The commendable parts of a good pastor.*—1. He must be for his learning a "master"—able to teach, apt to teach, a guide to the blind, a light to them that are in darkness. 2. He must be "true"; which some apply to pureness of life, but others think the words "and teachest truly the way of life" expound the clause "Thou art true." 3. He must not utter his own dream, or the vision of his own heart, but "teach the way of God" (1 Pet. iv. 11). 4. He must have certainty of doctrine, teaching the truth aright (Jer. xxiii. 28; Rom. xii. 6). 5. He must be stout in delivering God's ambassage (Ezek. ii. 6).—*Ibid.*

*Suspicious blandishments.*—The old word is, "Full of courtesy, full of craft." When ye see too glittering pretences in unapproved persons, suspect the inside (Ps. xxviii. 3; Amos vii. 12, 13; 2 Cor. i. 12).—*Bishop Hall.*

Ver. 15. *Hypocrisy exposed.*—Christ, as God, seeing their hypocritical humour, and understanding their treacherous intent, accommodates His answer to the foul malice of their mind, not to the fair words of their mouth, objecting against them four faults especially. 1. Folly. "Why?" For if I am (as you say) "true," then I am God, because every man is a liar, and only God true, yea truth itself; and if I be the Son of God, I can easily make your wisdom foolishness. 2. Treachery. "Why tempt ye?" 3. Ingratitude. "Why tempt ye Me,

who teach unto you the way of God truly, desiring often to gather your children together?" etc. 4. Dissimulation. "*Ye hypocrites.*" Having thus in a trice confounded them, He proceeds in the next clause to confute them, even by their own words and deeds, as the soldiers of Timotheus were wounded with the points of their own swords (2 Mac. xii. 22).—*Dean Boys.*

Vers. 16, 17. *Coinage a token of authority.*—It has been ingeniously and not irrationally suggested that our Lord's sanction of the payment of tribute money to Cæsar may afford a hint to Christians of the point at which they may conscientiously yield obedience to a fresh civil authority. If that authority is so recognised that its coin is admitted as the medium of exchange, its tenure may fairly be considered as a *fait accompli*.

*The King's image on the heart.*—The heart of the believer should be a golden coin, so graven with loyalty and love to the Heavenly King that there ought to be no hesitation in answering the question, "Whose image and superscription is it?"

*Church and State.*—Consider the respective rights of Church and State in property, and the duty of men who may at the same time be members of the Church and subjects of the State to regard the rights and vested interests of both. In discriminating between those mutual well-defined rights and vested interests in property, the question of our Lord comes in, helping us in the knowledge and performance of our twofold duty, in our twofold capacity as members of the Church and subjects of the State. 1. Whose is this image and superscription, we ask on the one hand, of all temporal things which belong unto Cæsar? The answer is Cæsar's image and superscription. Then our duty is to render such things unto

Cæsar. 2. Whose is this image and superscription, we inquire on the other hand, borne upon the Church's possessions? The answer is God's. His sacred superscription is upon them. To God they were consecrated. Their use was given to His Church and her ministers and members, not for general purposes, but for God's honour, glory, worship, and for the spiritual and ecclesiastical uses of all subjects of the kingdom, who will use them on the lines laid down in her terms of communion exclusively for and consistently with these purposes.

*Religion no enemy to government.*—Among all the stratagems of the devil, tending to the undermining of religion and the subversion of the souls of men, though there cannot be any more unreasonable, yet there was never any more unhappily successful, than the creating and fomenting an opinion in the world that religion is an enemy to government, and the bringing sincerity and zeal in religion into jealousy and disgrace with the civil powers (Luke xxiii. 2; Acts xvii. 6, xxiii. 4, 5).—*Bishop Seth Ward.*

*Loyalty of early Christians to the emperor.*—We pray for the safety of the emperors to the eternal God, the true, the living God, whom emperors themselves would desire to be propitious to them, "above all others, who are called gods." We, looking up to heaven with outstretched hands, because they are harmless, with naked heads, because we are not ashamed

(1 Cor. vi. 7), without a prompter, because we pray from the heart, constantly pray for all emperors, that they may have a long life, a secure empire, a safe palace, strong armies, a faithful senate, a well-moralised people, a quiet state of the world—whatever Cæsar would wish for himself in his public and private capacity (Jer. xxix. 7; Dan. vi. 21; 1 Tim. ii. 2; 1 Pet. ii. 13-17).—*Tertullian.*

Ver. 17. "*They marvelled.*"—His remark concerning the superscription and image on the coin, as connecting the tribute with civil authority, and the opposition which He makes between such demands and the things belonging to God, intimate a new character in the Messiah's theocracy, in which the ecclesiastical should no more interfere with the civil rule, or the obedience of the subject to the human magistrate be inconsistent with the obedience of the believer to God. Cæsar's dominion was to be one, Christ's another. Jesus was a king, but not of this world.—*S. Hinds.*

*Innocence the best protection against craft.*—Craft is ever one of the arts of the wayward; they who believe in it find it needful to employ it. At first sight it seems as if the children of truth and simplicity must be at the mercy of the unscrupulous. What happens here should reassure us. If we are true-hearted and transparent, no craft will avail against us.—*R. Glover.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses 18—27.*

(PARALLELS : MATT. xxii. 23-33; LUKE xx. 27-38.)

*Christ's argument against the Sadducees.*—The Sadducees were a libertine sect of the Jews who, for the sake of indulging their lusts, and to remove the dread of an after-reckoning, thought proper to reject the belief of a resurrection and a life to come. But yet, to save appearances, and to keep up an outward shew of religion among their countrymen, they professed a great regard to the same common Scriptures as the oracles of God, and sought out colours from those very Scriptures whereby to countenance or seemingly to authorise their wanton and wicked opinions. They came to our Lord, and propounded a captious question to Him, grounded upon Moses' law, artfully insinuating as if Moses himself must have been in their sentiments. Our Lord in reply corrected their



fond mistake in judging of a life to come by the life that now is, when circumstances would be widely different. In this world, where mankind go off and die daily, there is a necessity of a constant and regular succession to supply the decays of mortality. But in a world to come, where none die any more, the reason then ceases, inasmuch as there will be no occasion for any further supplies. Our Lord, by thus distinguishing upon the case, defeated the objection; but to shew further how ill the Sadducees had contrived in appealing to Moses as a favourer of their sentiments, He reminds them of a famous passage in Moses' law which was directly contrary to their principles, being indeed a full and clear proof of a resurrection and future state.

**I. What the distinguishing principles of the ancient Sadducees really were.**—They denied a future state; they did not allow that the soul survived the body. They looked upon the doctrines of a resurrection and future state to be so nearly allied, or so closely connected with each other, that they might reasonably be conceived to stand or fall together. Wherefore they denied both, as on the other hand the Pharisees admitted both. There is one difficulty in St. Luke's account of the Sadducees (Acts xxiii. 8), relating to their denial of the existence of angels. Other accounts of Jewish writers are silent on that head; and it might seem very needless for the Sadducees to clog their cause with it, since it was sufficient for their purpose to reject only the separate subsistence of human souls; and it is odd that they should run so flatly counter to the history of the Old Testament (which is full of what concerns angels) when they had really no great necessity for it, nor temptation to it, so far as appears. But perhaps they thought it the shortest and surest way to reject the whole doctrine of spirits, or at least of created spirits, and so to settle in materialism, after the example of some pagan philosophers; and therefore they at once discarded both angels and separate souls. And as to the Old Testament standing directly against them with respect to angels, there are so many various ways of playing upon words, especially in dead writings, that men resolute to maintain a point (whatever it be) can never be at a loss for evasions. Possibly, however, St. Luke, knowing that the word "angel" had been used to mean no more than a human soul, might mean only to say that the Sadducees rejected the doctrine of the resurrection and the other doctrine of separate souls, whether called angels, as by some, or spirits only, as by others. This account will appear the better when it is considered that St. Luke says the Pharisees admitted both. Both what? There had been three things mentioned, if angel makes a distinct article. But if angel there means no more than a human soul, then the articles are reduced to two only; and so it was very proper to say both, namely, both the resurrection and the separate state of the soul.

**II. Inquire why our Blessed Lord chose to confront the Sadducees with a text out of Moses' writings, rather than out of any other part of the Old Testament.**—Some have given it for a reason of our Lord's choice, that Moses' books were the only ones which the Sadducees received as Canonical Scripture. But the fact is disputable at least, if not certainly false. Others say that our Lord chose to confute them out of the Book of the Law, as being of prime value and of greatest authority. And that indeed is a consideration not without weight. But I conceive that we have no occasion to look far for reasons, when the text itself, with what goes along with it, sufficiently accounts for the whole thing. The Sadducees had formed their objection upon the books of Moses, claiming Moses as a voucher on their side. In such a case it was extremely proper and pertinent (if it could be done) to confute them from Moses himself. It was vindicating Moses' writings at the same time that it was doing justice to an important truth. Our Lord therefore applied Himself entirely to the clearing up Moses' sentiments in that article; and He effected it two ways: first, by

observing that what the Sadducees had cited from him did not prove what they wished for; and, secondly, by shewing that what he had taught elsewhere fully and clearly disproved it.

III. Consider the force of our Lord's argument, which was then so clearly apprehended at first hearing by friends and adversaries, and admired by all.—The words which the argument is grounded upon occur in Exod. iii. 6: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." "I am," not, "I was." God was then God of those three patriarchs, the latest of whom had been dead above a hundred and seventy years. Still He continued to be their God. What could that mean? Is He a God of lifeless clay, of mouldered carcases, of dust and rottenness? No, sure. Besides, with what propriety of speech could the ashes of the ground be yet called Abraham or Isaac or Jacob? Those names are the names of persons, not of senseless earth; and person always goes where the intelligence goes. Therefore Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still living and intelligent, somewhere or other, when God declared He was still their God—that is to say, they were alive as to their better part, their souls. He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; therefore the soul survives the body. Therefore the Sadducees, who denied the separate subsistence of souls or spirits, were confuted at once, and that by a very clear and plain text, produced even from the books of Moses. But it will be asked, "How does this prove the resurrection of the body, which was the point in question?" I answer that was not the only point, nor the main point, though it follows this other, as I shall shew presently. But even if the argument really reached no further than what I have mentioned, yet it was a very considerable point gained, and the rest was not worth disputing. What they were afraid of was a future account. Now whether men shall give an account in the body or without the body, it would come much to the same; for still there would be an account to be given, and there would remain the like dreadful apprehension of a judgment to come. Here lay the main stress of the dispute; and therefore when our Lord had undeniably proved a future state, He had gone to the very root of the Sadducean principles, and if they once yielded thus far they might readily grant the rest. For if it be considered that death was the punishment of sin, and that every person remaining under that sentence and under the dominion of death still carries about him the badges of the first transgression and the marks of Divine displeasure, it cannot reasonably be supposed that the souls of good men whom God has owned for His shall for ever remain in that inglorious state, but will some time or other be restored to their first honours, or to what they were first ordained to in paradise before sin entered. Wherefore since God is pleased to acknowledge Himself still God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is highly reasonable to presume that He will in due time restore them to their original privileges, removing from them the chains of death by reuniting soul and body together in a happy and glorious resurrection. Thus the same thread of argument which our Lord began with, and which directly proves the immortality of the soul, does also in conclusion lead us on by just and clear consequences to the resurrection of the body.—*Archdeacon Waterland.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 24-27. *Christ's reply to the Sadducees.*—1. God is able to preserve old forms of life and to produce new. 2. Marriage, birth, and death belong only to the earthly life. 3. The mission of Moses was confirmed by the

testimony of Christ. 4. They who are now dead to men still live with God.—*J. H. Godwin.*

Ver. 26. *The fulness of Scripture.*—How much more there is in Scripture

than at first sight appears! God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, and called Himself the God of Abraham; and Christ tells us that in this simple announcement was contained the promise that Abraham should rise again from the dead. In truth, if we may say it with reverence, the All-wise, All-knowing God cannot speak without meaning many things at once. He "sees the end from the beginning"; He understands the numberless connexions and relations of all things, one with another. Every word of His is full of instruction, looking many ways; and though it is not often given to us to know these various senses, and we are not at liberty to attempt lightly to imagine them, yet, as far as they are told us, and as far as we may reasonably infer them, we must thankfully accept them (Ps. cxix. 96).—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

Ver. 27. *The Divine estimate of death.*—In the Infinite view there is not a cemetery in the universe, not a grave on any globe that gleams in the sky. For there is no cessation or interruption of life caused by that which seems to us death. The body, as He looks upon it, is the spirit's garment only; and however we are called to meet death—whether by slow disease or by water or by fire or by tempest, at the end of years or in youth or in the full powers of manhood, on the sick-bed or the battle-field—to His vision it is but the stripping off of a robe and the liberation of the clothed essence into higher forms of being.—*T. Starr King.*

*Effect on character of belief as to future life.*—The belief in a fuller life beyond the grave must influence character indefinitely. Even in days before Christianity, among heathens, it did so. Herodotus tells us of a tribe among the Thracians who believed themselves immortal. "The men of this tribe," he says, "were the bravest and the most honourable." It cannot but make a difference whether our hopes end with the grave or not.—*W. R. Hutton.*

*The communion of saints.*—Long before light and immortality were brought to light by the gospel, the greatest moral philosopher of the ancient world discussed this question of the relation of the dead to the living in memorable words, and he came to the conclusion that to suppose the departed unmindful of the friends who survive them is too heartless a notion to be entertained. Truly and spiritually, in all the essentials of unity, the departed are with us and we with them: we are still members of the same family of God; one and the same roof is still over us; they have but passed into a brighter and better compartment of the same great home and house of Christ; and whatever they are doing, beholding or enjoying, we cannot believe that they cease to think of us or to pray for us; nay, we cannot but suppose that they think of us now with a purer interest and a deeper love than was ever possible here. Few things are more remarkable than the contrast between the faith of the Church and our practice. Many of us are far behind the heathen in fidelity to our dead. We profess to accept the glorious consolation which is ours through the Risen Christ; we profess to believe that they are all living in God, and that we are one with them, that the whole Church this side the veil and beyond it is one and the same household; and yet we sink into chill indifference, we suffer new interests, new excitement, new faces, to usurp their place and to turn into solemn mockery the hopes and regrets we once inscribed upon their grave. I suppose there can be little doubt that the chief cause of that habit of mind which has made the communion of saints so unreal is the modern disuse of prayers for the departed. They are all but banished from our devotions. For thousands of years, let it be remembered, prayers for the dead were a part of the instituted service of God's people; they were in use among the Israelites hundreds of years before Christ; they were in use in the



synagogue and Temple worship in which He was wont to join, and they are used by the Jews to this day. They are to be found in every ancient liturgy of the Christian Church which has come down to us. But, whatever be the decision to which we see our way on this particular point, let us realise the duty and the blessedness of strengthening by all legitimate means our faith in the indestructible bond which knits in holy communion and fellowship the whole redeemed family of God. We talk and act as though we on this side of the veil constituted the whole Catholic Church; we forget that the majority is elsewhere, that we are

but a fraction of it: we forget the great cloud of witnesses gathered during the ages growing day by day, the unseen multitude which no man can number: we think but seldom of that paradise of God, that land of the living, where loyal hearts and true stand ever in the light. Ah, brethren, it is we who are in the shadows and the darkness, not they. Let us be true to their memories: let the thought of what they are and where they are be a continual inspiration; let it lift us above the earthliness and littleness of the present, and shed more and more over mind and heart the solemnising powers of the world to come.—*Canon Duckworth.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 28—34.

(PARALLEL: MATT. xxii. 34-40.)

*Christ's interview with a scribe.*—The character of the scribes and Pharisees, as a body, is held up by our Lord to the abhorrence of all who would serve God in spirit and in truth. See Matt. xvi. 6-12, xxiii. 1-36. But experience teaches that no general description of a class of men, however just, is applicable to every individual in it. We are not, therefore, surprised to find here a notable exception to the rule—a scribe who entertains such worthy notions of religion as to win the commendation of Christ.

**I. The occasion.**—The Pharisees and the Sadducees had, one after another, put questions to our Lord, for the purpose of catching or ensnaring Him in His talk. He, seeing through their hypocrisy, gave them such answers as neither satisfied them nor afforded them a handle to use against Him. Then one of the scribes, struck with the appositeness of His replies, determined to put a question of his own, to try whether He who had so properly silenced the crafty and malicious would be as ready with a suitable answer to an honest and serious inquirer.

**II. The scribe's question.**—"Which is the first commandment of all?" 1. If his object was to test the merits and attainments of this new Teacher, and to see whether He had a correct notion of that law which He professed to expound, he could not have put a more appropriate question. It would be a parallel case if, in the present day, a professing Christian were to be called upon to state which is the greatest and most distinguishing doctrine of Christianity, or its most excellent privilege. Those persons who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," would either be unable to answer at all, or would answer in such a way as to prove that they were destitute of any clear and comprehensive views of Divine truth. 2. This question was one very frequently discussed in the schools of the Rabbis; and from many of them it received answers very wide of the mark. Some said the commandment relating to the Sabbath was the greatest of all; others set the highest value on the laws relating to sacrifices, or to purifications. This scribe appears to have come to a sounder conclusion, and to have been anxious to discover whether this new Teacher would confirm him in it.

III. **Our Lord's reply.**—This question being honestly put, Christ meets it in a very different manner from that in which He had silenced His enemies. Without hesitation, and without ambiguity, the Oracle of Divine truth delivers His infallible sentence. 1. Whereas the question referred to one commandment only, our Lord in His reply brings forward two. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," He says, is the first commandment. But the mention of a *first* naturally suggests a *second*, without which the first might appear incomplete. It is true that the love of God, if perfect and sincere, will constrain us, by a moral necessity, to love our brother also. Still, in a matter of so much practical importance, it is desirable that there should be no room for cavil or mistake. Therefore He proceeds: "And the second is like," etc. 2. "There is none other commandment greater than these." (1) In comprehensiveness. Whatever commandments may be added to these, can they require of us anything greater than is already required by these? (2) In fundamental importance (Matt. xxii. 40). These are the two great principles upon which all statutes, ordinances, and judgments, which can be given or conceived, are based. Take away the obligation of these two, and it will be impossible to maintain the authority of any others.

IV. **The scribe's remark upon Christ's answer.**—1. His language is that of a man who, having long considered the subject, and come to a conclusion not generally accredited among those of his own set, at last meets with one whose opinion agrees with his own. 2. In declaring his conviction that the observance of these two commandments "is *more* than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices," he does not mean to imply that burnt offerings and sacrifices are *nothing*. To him, as a Jew, they were much. They were that wherewith man should "come before the Lord, and bow himself before the high God"; they were the suitable recognitions of the Divine bounty; and, what is still more to the purpose, they were the means appointed by God Himself for the acknowledgment and atonement of sin. What, therefore, though God had declared that "to obey is better than sacrifice," since He had also declared that sacrifice was necessary to supply the deficiencies of obedience, and thus it became, in fact, a part of obedience! It was not for a Jew to ask how the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin, or how that Great Being who owned "every beast of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills" should condescend to accept a bullock out of his house or a he-goat out of his folds. It was enough for him to know that God in His wisdom had provided for the continuance of these things till *He* came into the world who should provide a *real* sacrifice for sin, and by one offering perfect for ever them that are sanctified.

V. **Christ's commendation of the scribe.**—Here is—1. An approbation of the scribe's remark. It was a "discreet" answer, *i.e.* moderate and judicious. If, in his admiration of inward and spiritual religion, he had spoken contemptuously of forms and ceremonies, we should have said his meaning was good, but his language indiscreet. As it was, however, he hit the happy mean of exalting the one without degrading the other. He shewed no disposition to disparage the most literal compliance with every jot and tittle of the ceremonial law; he was only anxious that the body and the spirit, the form and the substance of religion, should be estimated in their proper order—first purity of heart, and then scrupulousness of obedience. This was exactly in accordance with Christ's own teaching (Matt. xxiii. 23). 2. A commendation of the individual himself. "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," *i.e.* thou art in a favourable state of mind for embracing the gospel. (1) The honesty of intention which distinguished this scribe was a very important qualification for his reception of the truth. (2) His spiritual conception of religion was an even more valuable preparation. A Jew thus enlightened had, to a certain

extent, forestalled the gospel; he would find most congenial to his mind those very sayings of Christ which to others were the hardest of all (Matt. ix. 13, xii. 7; Mark ii. 27, vii. 15-23; John iv. 21, 23).

*Love to God and one's neighbour.*—I. **The nature and properties of love.**—1. It is a passion of the soul, that inclines it to unite to the thing beloved. 2. Its properties are chiefly these two: (1) A desire to please, and (2) A desire to enjoy.

II. **The double object of love.**—1. The first and great object of our love is God. (1) He is "the Lord"; and so His power and sovereignty may command our affections. (2) He is "our God," in covenant and relation to us; and so His kindness and nearness to us may engage us to love Him. 2. The other object of our love is our neighbour. He is to be loved by us—(1) Chiefly for God's sake, whose creature, child, and servant he is (1 John iv. 20, 21). (2) For our own sake, because he has the same nature as ourselves (Prov. xxii. 2).

III. **In what measure these two are to be loved.**—1. The loving of God with all the heart, etc., denotes both the sincerity and integrity of our love to Him. (1) The sincerity is signified by its being from the heart; what springs from thence is commonly sound and sincere. (2) "With *all* thy heart," etc., denotes the integrity. God will admit of no rival with Him in our affections. Though He loves a broken He hates a divided heart. 2. "Thy neighbour as thyself"—that is, with a like though not always with an equal affection; for every one being nearest to himself may be allowed, first, to consult his own welfare. Charity begins at home, though it must not end there, but must extend to all that are round about us, making our own desires the measure and standard of our dealing with others, doing all that good to others which we would have done to us, and avoiding all that evil to any which we ourselves would be unwilling to bear.—*M. Hole, D.D.*

*Christ's first and second commandments.*—I. **How is the love of God said to be the first commandment?**—1. It is so in order of time, the love of God being the first thing to be taught and learnt of all that come to Him; for all true religion begins with it and is founded upon it: it is the first step we are to make towards our Maker, and that will lead us on to all the other parts of our duty and obedience to Him. 2. It is the first in order of nature, as being the root and spring of all other virtues. He that truly loves God will fear Him above all things, will trust Him in all conditions, will honour Him in all his actions, will worship Him at all times, and in a word will serve and depend upon Him in the whole course of his life.

II. **How is the loving our neighbour the second and like unto the first commandment?**—1. In respect of the authority that commands it, and our obligation to observe it, which is the same in both. 2. In respect of the ground and motive of our obedience, which are some Divine perfections residing in God and communicated to His creatures. Our love to man is grounded upon the love of God; and we depart not from the love of our Maker by loving our neighbour, but rather heighten and increase it; for it is for God's sake, and on His account, that we pay this affection to His creature. 3. In respect of the extent and comprehensiveness of it; for as the love of God includes the whole of that duty and homage we owe unto Him, so the love of our neighbour comprises all the good offices we are to pay unto him. 4. In respect of the reward and punishment that attend the keeping and breaking of it, which is the same in both. See Matt. xxv. 31-46.—*Ibid.*

*Completeness of character in serving God.*—Jesus took this questioner back



to the familiar beginning of things—to a well-worn platitude of the Jewish system—and, leading this man to old and familiar ground, made him work the old machinery with a new leverage, as the life of Christ fulfilled the old command, and lighted up the letter of the Mosaic economy with the spirit of the new-found Christian faith.

I. By loving God with all our **heart** we mean the placing of our affections upon Him. By the heart we mean love, emotion, the vitality of the tender, responsive, emotional side of our being. But you say, "How can I love God, for I have never seen Him?" A mother who had lost an only child in her brooding grief adopted an unknown child in a foreign mission school. The Arab boy was at first an unknown quantity to her. She assumed that the child was and the child became in time real to her. Not her reason but her affections were set upon the child who took the place of her own lost one. She loved him with all her poor broken heart, and by-and-by they met, each having saved the other. In the same way, dear friends, you must assume that God is, until He becomes real to you. You must love Him who is unknown, in the light of all His righteousness, until He becomes known to you. Your affections must grow towards God; they must lead the way to Him, for the rest of our nature always follows the leading of the heart.

II. By loving God with all the **soul** we mean giving to God and His service that which is the very essence of a being, the internal, animating principle of our lives. What we mean by soul is that essence or spirit within us which is regardless of matter. The power of the soul is a very different quality from the power of the heart. We may defend a cause or a person, or throw our lives into a certain current, because the soul compels us to that course of action, regardless of the heart. The power of the heart is in idealising another. The power of the soul is in idealising some hidden strength within ourselves. You love your darling child with all your heart. You love the cause you have at heart with all your soul. This is what is meant by soul—it is the rising above all the hindrances and limitations of our physical and material nature. Brethren, that is the kind of strength in us which God wants. It is that which we ought to give to Him, and which is always a great and commanding power when we find it ruling a strong character in the religious life.

III. By loving God with all the **mind** we mean putting into exercise our reasoning faculties with regard to Him. God can never be real to you unless you have real and definite thoughts with reference to Him. Begin with the fact of Jesus Christ, study out the meaning of the Christian Church, take in the grasp of the religious instincts and the moral faculties, study out God in history, believe in a definite Holy Ghost, and you will find that the mind will grow by what it feeds on, and that God will be a reality to your mind, when your mind has a real grasp upon God.

IV. By loving God with all our **strength** is meant the co-ordination of our powers and faculties in such a way as to shew the force of our character, the energy of our entire nature, the putting of our energies into exercise, and the command of our own personality over our mere circumstances and surroundings. We mean by the exercise of all our powers, through the unit of the individual will, what Frederick the Great meant when speaking of William Pitt. He said, "England has been a long time in labour, but she has at last brought forth a man." In the same way heart and soul and mind, when they become united with a definite will and purpose, produce that strength which shews itself in action—that belief which becomes a living force when it is translated into a life! How is it, then, that this wholeness of service ensures us against restlessness and unbelief and sin? The answer is very plain.

Do you not see that if you have this much of the bulk of your nature on the side of the service of God, if God is real enough to you to claim a real and honest portion of your nature in every department—in heart, in soul, in mind, and in strength—there will be no trouble either in your belief in Him or in your service for Him? You will have exalted the spiritual side of your nature over the tyrannous rule of the body with its material demands, and you will be living upward to God instead of downward towards self; and the Being who had claimed and has received your affection, your soul, your mind, and your concentrated force of living will give you as a reward those returns of a spiritual life which grow to great results in our life in exact proportion to our daily practice.—*W. W. Newton.*

Ver. 34. *Obedience to God the way to faith in Christ.*—In these words we are taught, first, that the Christian's faith and obedience are not the same religion as that of natural conscience, as being some way beyond it; secondly, that this way is "not far"—not far in the case of those who try to act up to their conscience; in other words, that obedience to conscience leads to obedience to the gospel, which, instead of being something different altogether, is but the completion and perfection of that religion which natural conscience teaches. Indeed, it would have been strange if the God of nature had said one thing and the God of grace another, if the truths which our conscience taught us without the information of Scripture were contradicted by that information when obtained. But it is not so; there are not two ways of pleasing God; what conscience suggests Christ has sanctioned and explained; to love God and our neighbour are the great duties of the gospel as well as of the law; he who endeavours to fulfil them by the light of nature is in the way towards, is, as our Lord said, "not far from Christ's kingdom"; for to him that hath more shall be given.

I. Consider how plainly we are taught in Scripture that perfect obedience is the standard of gospel holiness.—Rom. xii. 2; 1 Cor. vii. 19; Phil. iv. 8; Jas. ii. 10; 2 Pet. i. 5-7; John xiv. 21; Matt. v. 19. These texts, and a multitude of others, shew that the gospel leaves us just where it found us, as regards the necessity of our obedience to God; that Christ has not obeyed instead of us, but that obedience is quite as imperative as if Christ had never come; nay, is pressed upon us with additional sanctions; the difference being, not that He relaxes the strict rule of keeping His commandments, but that He gives us spiritual aids, which we have not except through Him, to enable us to keep them. Accordingly Christ's service is represented in Scripture, not as different from that religious obedience which conscience teaches us naturally, but as the perfection of it. We are told again and again that obedience to God leads on to faith in Christ, that it is the only recognised way to Christ, and that therefore to believe in Him ordinarily implies that we are living in obedience to God (John vi. 45, iii. 21, vii. 17, xv. 23, viii. 19; 1 John ii. 23; 2 John 9; 2 Cor. iv. 4).

II. If we look to the history of the first propagation of the gospel, we find this view confirmed.—The early Christian Church was principally composed of those who had long been in the habit of obeying their consciences carefully, and so preparing themselves for Christ's religion, that kingdom of God from which the text says they were not far (Luke i. 6; Matt. i. 19; Luke ii. 25; John i. 47; Luke xxiii. 50; Acts x. 2, xiii., xvii.). But it may be asked, "Did Christ hold out no hope for those who had lived in sin?" Doubtless He did, if they determined to forsake their sin. When sinners truly repent, then indeed they are altogether brothers in Christ's kingdom with those who have not in the same sense "need of repentance"; but that they should repent at all is, alas!

so far from being likely, that when the unexpected event takes place it causes such joy in heaven (from the marvellousness of it) as is not even excited by the ninety and nine just persons who need no such change of mind. Of such changes some instances are given us in the Gospels, for the encouragement of all penitents, such as that of the woman, mentioned by St. Luke, who "loved much." And, moreover, of these penitents of whom I speak, and whom, when they become penitents, we cannot love too dearly (after our Saviour's pattern), nay, or reverence too highly, and whom the apostles, after Christ's departure, brought into the Church in such vast multitudes, none, as far as we know, had any sudden change of mind from bad to good wrought in them, nor do we hear of any of them honoured with any important station in the Church. I have confined myself to the time of Christ's coming; but not only then, but at all times and under all circumstances, as all parts of the Bible inform us, obedience to the light we possess is the way to gain more light (Prov. viii. 17-20; Luke xvi. 10; Mark iv. 25).

### III. Some of the consequences which follow from this great Scripture truth.—

1. First, we see the hopelessness of waiting for any sudden change of heart, if we are at present living in sin. To all those who live a self-indulgent life, however they veil their self-indulgence from themselves by a notion of their superior religious knowledge, and by their faculty of speaking fluently in Scripture language, to all such the Word of life says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked"; He tries the heart, and disdains the mere worship of the lips. He acknowledges no man as a believer in His Son who does not anxiously struggle to obey His commandments to the utmost; to none of those who seek without striving, and who consider themselves safe, to none of these does He give "power to become sons of God." 2. But, after all, there are very many more than I have as yet mentioned who wait for a time of repentance to come, while at present they live in sin. For instance, the young, who think it will be time enough to think of God when they grow old, that religion will then come as a matter of course, and that they will then like it naturally, just as they now like their follies and sins. Or those who are much engaged in worldly business, who confess they do not give that attention to religion which they ought to give, who neglect the ordinances of the Church, who allow themselves in various small transgressions of their conscience, and resolutely harden themselves against the remorse which such transgressions are calculated to cause them; and all this they do under the idea that at length a convenient season will come when they may give themselves to religious duties. All such persons do not, in their hearts, believe our Lord's doctrine contained in the text, that to obey God is to be near Christ, and that to disobey is to be far from Him. How will this truth be plain to us in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed! Now we do not believe that strict obedience is as necessary as it is. We put something before it, in our doctrinal system, as more necessary than it; one man puts faith, another outward devotion, a third attention to his temporal calling, another zeal for the Church—that is, we put a part for the whole of our duty, and so run the risk of losing our souls. These are the burnt offerings and sacrifices which even the scribe put aside before the weightier matters of the law. Or, again, we fancy that the means of gaining heaven are something stranger and rarer than the mere obvious duty of obedience to God: we are loath to seek Christ in the waters of Jordan rather than in Pharpar and Abana, rivers of Damascus; we prefer to seek Him in the height above, or to descend into the deep, rather than to believe that the Word is nigh us, even in our mouth and in our heart. Hence in false religions some men have even tortured themselves and been cruel to their flesh, thereby to become as gods, and to mount aloft; and in our own, with a not less melancholy, though less self-denying, error, men



fancy that certain strange effects on their minds, strong emotion, restlessness, and an unmanly excitement and extravagance of thought and feeling, are the tokens of that inscrutable Spirit who is given us, not to make us something other than men, but to make us, what without His gracious aid we never shall be, upright, self-mastering men, humble and obedient children of our Lord and Saviour. In that day of trial all these deceits will be laid aside; we shall stand in our own real form, whether it be of heaven or of earth, the wedding garment or the old raiment of sin; and then how many, do we think, will be revealed as the heirs of light, who have followed Christ in His narrow way, and humbled themselves after His manner (though not in His perfection, and with nothing of His merit) to the daily duties of soberness, mercy, gentleness, self-denial, and the fear of God?—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 28-31. *The scribe's question*, or catch, was a common one among the learned of that day; and this answer of Jesus was the recognised solution of it. Long before now another lawyer, when asked by Jesus, "What is written in the law? How dost thou read it?" had replied in similar terms (Luke x. 25-27). So that our Lord's answer was not original, was not His private solution of the problem; it was the common and accepted solution among the students and masters of the law, as indeed *this* master himself confesses in the next verse. The only wonder to those who heard it from the lips of Jesus was how *He* came to know it, He who had "never learned," never sat at the feet of any of their rabbis or passed through any of their schools. An ordinary layman would have been posed by it. For neither "the first and great commandment," nor "the second, which is like unto it," was contained in the Decalogue, though obedience to them was far "more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." The first, that which enjoins love to God, is only given incidentally, in a summary of human duty contained in Deut. vi. 5; and, again, x. 12. The second, that which enjoins love for our neighbour, is hidden away among a crowd of Levitical enactments of the most minute and burdensome kind (Lev. xix. 18). It took some knowledge of the law, therefore, to find these two commandments at all; and much knowledge, much spiritual insight and a

deep sympathy with the animating spirit of the Hebrew law, to discover that they were the first and best commandments of all. And it shews, I think, what a real genius for religion the Jews had, that even the hide-bound rabbis and scribes had discerned for themselves that love—love to God and man—is the end of the commandment and the fulfilling of the law. But, though they would have used the very words which Jesus used, would they have used them in the same sense? They would have selected—they *had* selected—the same two commandments as the great commandments; but did they see in them the meaning that He saw? We know they did not. To them this answer was only the right answer to a legal catch; to Him it was the supreme fact of human life. For what else had He come into the world but just this?—to induce men, by revealing God's hearty love for them, to love Him with all their hearts, and their neighbours as themselves.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

*Christ's two commandments and the Decalogue.*—Have the two commandments of Christ superseded the ten commandments of Moses? Yes and No: they abolish only by fulfilling them. So long as we are compassed about with infirmity, and come short therefore of the full height of the charity of love, it is very meet, right, and our bounden duty to bear in mind the commandments of the law, and to enforce ourselves to obey them. And

yet, if we could but keep the two commandments, what need should we have of the ten, or of any other commandment? How can any man who loves God with all his heart have any other God besides Him? How can any man who loves God with the whole of his mind, with full and clear intelligence, make unto him any graven images, any idol, and bow down before it? How can any man who loves God with all his soul take the name of the Lord his God in vain? How can any man who loves God with all his strength forget to hallow every day to His service, and not only the seventh? Or how can any man who loves his neighbour as himself fail to honour all men, and not only his father and mother, or do any murder, or commit adultery, or steal, or bear false witness, or covet anything that is his neighbour's? Within the compass of these two commandments the whole law does hang and move: love is the fulfilling of the law; and he that walketh in love both walks at large (*i.e.* in liberty) and keeps all the commandments of God.—*Ibid.*

*True religion.*—1. True religion can be no disjointed, fragmentary affair. As the forest tree is one tree, though it have a myriad branches and twigs and leaves, because it has one root, so the true religious life must be one because it can have but one root—supreme love to God. 2. True religion engages the whole man, mind and soul and affections, while the strength and power to carry out its behests are not wanting. The intellect and the emotions, the spiritual nature, and the will and force to make the Spirit effective are all drawn upon. 3. Philanthropy is not religion; but there can be no true religion without philanthropy. We love God whom we have not seen because we have learned to love our fellow-men whom we have seen, and our love to our fellow-men is intense and pure and active in proportion to the strength of our devotion to the Lord our God. 4. True religion is an active influence, leading us to do as

well as think, to act as well as feel. 5. While true religion demands our all, it demands no more than any one can give. No experience that is beyond us is demanded. No angel's love, no seraph's might, not the devotion of the ripened saint unless his years and experience have been attained, but "with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself."—*F. E. Clark.*

*Guidance in the religious life.*—These words of Christ form a noble guide for the religious life. You are concerned with religion in many of its varied aspects. You are interested in thoughts about God and His relation to the world and man; you give expression to your spiritual aspirations in one and another form of worship; you bear your share of the Christian activity of the congregation; and you can never escape from the demands made upon you for Christian conduct. Forget not what religion according to Christ means. Take heed lest you be so engrossed with its mere accidents that you lose sight of its substance. Strive that you may grow in love to God and man. Despise not creeds and theologies, but so use creed, theology, and Bible that you may gain that deeper insight into God and God's ways with men which will waken a deeper love. In recoil from a ritualism which sets more store by the means than by the end which is subserved by the means, do not rashly sit too loosely to forms of worship, but so use these forms that they may serve to bring you nearer God and nearer man. In the sphere of Christian duty beware of the letter which killeth, rise above mere obedience to external law, and ever seek in your relations with others to have a fresh baptism of that love by which alone the law of Christ can be fulfilled. And in the work you undertake in Christ's Church on behalf of others be not content with their acceptance of a creed, with their participation in religious worship, or with the observance of the respectabilities of social life; strive to lead them into the love of

God and man; and that you may be successful in that work grow yourself in that love, for love is begotten by love.—*D. M. Ross.*

Ver. 29. *The unity of God.*—What a massive and reassuring thought! Amid the debasements of idolatry, with its deification of every impulse and every force, amid the distractions of chance and change, seemingly so capricious and even discordant, amid the complexities of the universe and its phenomena, there is wonderful strength and wisdom in the reflexion that God is one. All changes obey His hand which holds the rein; by Him the worlds were made. The exiled patriarch was overwhelmed by the majesty of the revelation that his fathers' God was God in Bethel even as in Beersheba: it charmed away the bitter sense of isolation, it unsealed in him the fountains of worship and trust, and sent him forward with a new hope of protection and prosperity. The unity of God, really apprehended, is a basis for the human will to repose upon, and to become self-consistent and at peace. It was the parent of the fruitful doctrine of the unity of nature which underlies all the scientific victories of the modern world. In religion St. Paul felt that it implies the equal treatment of all the human race (Rom. iii. 29).—*Dean Chadwick.*

Ver. 30. *Loving God with heart, soul, mind, and strength.*—We know what love is in the relation of husband and wife, of father and children, of friend with friend; and from time to time any thoughtful Christian asks himself somewhat sadly, "Do I, with the same reality of love, love God?" If we would endeavour to get some answer to this question in regard to ourselves, let us examine carefully this passage. 1. To love God with all my heart means that I do deliberately direct my life consciously to God as its first end, and that not generally only, but in detail also. I seek first the kingdom of God and His righteous-

ness in the small ordinary transactions of life as well as in the great movements of my life. 2. The soul or life means the sum of the faculties. There is the life of a plant, which means the sum of its faculties—the power of absorbing moisture, developing the leaves, the flower, and the fruit. There is the life or soul of the animal; that is, in addition to its powers of assimilation, digestion, and reproduction—powers also of movement and expression of sound—there is the sum of faculties, which is the life of the animal. And there is the sum of the faculties which belong to man in addition to those which the animal shares—those rational powers which constitute the true life of humanity. In part those powers belong to all men; in part they are the peculiar endowment of special individuals, as each of us has from Almighty God his special gifts and powers. To love God, then, "with all our soul," is to take stock of the faculties which God has given us, and deliberately as we realise what they are with increasing assurance as life goes on to direct them one by one and altogether to the service of God. 3. "To love the Lord our God with all our mind" is to direct our faculties of intellect to knowing what we can of God. Let us run through the various traits of the being of God which He has revealed to us. There is, first, His revelation in nature. It is a scene which, by captivating the spiritual imagination and faculties of man, discloses something of the mind and spiritual being of that God who is at work in it: power, wisdom, beauty; and not so only, for this scene is also a storehouse of truth. Everywhere God is appealing there to the mind of man, informing it, enlightening it. God is there disclosed in His power, in His beauty, in His truth. And yet we have but begun to estimate what we can know of God. There is that other great natural witness—the witness of conscience. So it is when man within himself becomes conscious of the



altogether new work of self-revelation. God is disclosed in righteousness. And then, once more, there is the moral character remaining, which is the argument of the psalmist: "He that made the eye, shall He not see? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" And our great poet Robert Browning has taught men to argue—He that made love and righteousness the character of man, must not He in Himself be greater than this moral work? So it is with men. They look to human nature, and see in what is best in man once more the order of the uncreated God. And yet what a wild scene this human nature is! How are we to discriminate between what belongs to human nature, between love and cruelty, between justice and tyranny? How shall we know what here is proper to human nature, and what is but the corruption of it? At this point there comes in the rectifying disclosure which God has given of Himself in the humanity of our Lord. Jesus Christ, our Master, gives us the true standard of human nature. There we see what belongs to man, and what is only the corruption of the gift of God. And yet in Jesus Christ is not only the disclosure of perfect manhood—it is the disclosure, under the conditions of our humanity, of perfect Godhood. He in man is very God. We look at His life, His forbearance, His patience, His gentleness, His self-sacrifice, and we see nothing else than forbearance and patience and gentleness—very God. So it is with point after point. Gradually we sum up what we can know of God, His power, His beauty, His truth, His righteousness, His love, His self-sacrifice—that being of God which is summed up in St. John's words: "God is love." And yet one step more. In thus disclosing to us His character God has revealed to us something at least of His own being. We could not conceive of God at all in blank, monotonous solitude. We could not conceive of a personal God living in the enjoyment of spiritual life in

monotonous solitude. There can be no life, no knowledge, no will, if there be no relationship, if there be no fellowship. But as God has come nearer to us in the person of His Son, He has disclosed to us something of those inner relationships which obtained eternally in His being—the relation of Father and Son and Holy Ghost. 4. With all our strength! What does that add to the other? This surely: that everything in human nature degenerates very rapidly into routine is an experience with which we are all only too unhappily familiar. Therefore to love the Lord our God with all our strength is again and again to make fresh beginnings in the love of God—again and again be as one who has not yet begun at all to learn the lesson of religion, so that new force of vitality may in each successive epoch of our life, in each successive morning of our life, be put into the service which we offer to God.—*Canon Gore.*

*Love to God.*—1. The sentiments and actions wherein love to God is chiefly exhibited. It implies in general to regard Him from intimate conviction as our sovereign good, as the source of all our happiness; to delight more in Him than in all things else; to prize and covet His favour and fellowship above all things; and diligently to make it our business to be well pleasing to Him. (1) Frequent meditation on God is the first particular by which the religious man evinces his love to the Supreme Being, and shews it to be operative in him. (2) The delight with which the religious man attends on public as well as private worship is the second particular whereby his love to God appears and shews itself active. (3) An enlightened and active zeal for the honour and glory of God is the third particular whereby the love towards God is manifested and effectively displayed. (4) A constant and earnest endeavour to please God by a willing and unlimited obedience to His commands is the fourth particular whereby the love

towards God is displayed and shewn to be effective. This, in fact, forms the most essential part of it. (5) The love of God must manifest itself by a sincere and effective love of our neighbour. God is infinitely superior to all necessities. We cannot augment His perfection, or give Him anything which He has not first given us. But He has rational creatures who bear His likeness, He has children, He has friends and subjects here on earth, whom we may effectually serve, to whom we may be useful in various ways, whose temporal and eternal prosperity we may promote. These He recommends to our love, to our care, to our relief. (6) Lastly, the love of God displays itself in sincere aspirations after heaven, where we shall be more intimately united with Him, and partake of His good pleasure in a superior degree. 2. How our love to God should be constituted, or what qualities it should possess, for being genuine. "With all thy heart, soul, mind, strength." These accumulated expressions, which apparently denote the selfsame thing, serve generally to shew the sincerity no less than the force and degree of the love which we owe to God. They give us to understand an undissembled, an ardent, an effective, and a constant love, captivating as it were the entire soul, setting all its capacities and energies in motion, and becoming a ruling affection. (1) It must be sincere. (2) We must love God above or more than all things else. (3) We must love all else that merits our esteem and affection, principally in regard and in reference to God as the author of it. (4) Our love to God must be firm and immutable. 3. The reasons which oblige us to such a love towards God. Love is founded on the excellency of its object, or on the close relations wherein we stand towards it, or on the benefits which we receive from it, or on the good we have to hope for from it. In regard to our love for God all these reasons unite together; and who does not perceive how strong and indissoluble they

render our obligation to it? (1) Where is the being that is more excellent, more venerable, more amiable than God? Does He not comprise in Himself whatever is beautiful, good, perfect? (2) Consider the close relation wherein you stand towards God, and the multitude, the greatness, the high value of the benefits you have received from Him. He is our Creator; we are the work of His hands. He is our Sovereign, and we are His subjects. He is our Father, and we His children. (3) Add the intrinsic excellency and the manifold utility of this virtue. (a) What can more delightfully employ the soul of a reasonable and virtuous being; what is more adapted to elevate and enlarge his capacities and powers; what can procure him a more pure, a more noble, a more sensible pleasure, than the love of a God who possesses all the prerogatives and attributes which only merit love in the supreme degree, without limitation and change; who is the ever-flowing and inexhaustible fountain of light, of life, of joy, of happiness; whose goodness and grace continue for ever and ever; and who will never cease to bless His friends and worshippers, and to make them happy? (b) What is more adapted to facilitate to us the practice of all the virtues, the discharge of all our duties, than the love of God? (c) What is more adapted to comfort us in all adversities, to render us firm and undaunted in every danger, and to give us the most certain hope of the completest happiness, than love towards God?—*G. J. Zollikofer.*

*The meaning of this commandment* for us is nothing less than this: that we are to cherish and maintain within ourselves an enthusiastic devotion to the highest vision that is vouchsafed us of the Eternal Reality, the Eternal Love, the Eternal Beauty.—*R. J. Fletcher.*

Ver. 31. *Duty to neighbour.*—Christ sums up all God's law, all man's duty, in the word "love." The love of God and its manifestation in the love of

man. 1. The strictness of the commandment and the frequency of its iteration. (1) Here it is put forth as the compendium of the law, and again Rom. xiii. 8. (2) The breach of charity is a bar to the acceptance by God of our elves and of our work (Matt. v. 23, 24; 1 John iii. 14). (3) It is the new commandment given by Christ on the most solemn occasion (John xiii. 34, 35). (4) It has attached to it the promise that its fulfilment shall cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet. iv. 8). 2. Its twofold channel of operation. (1) Alms-deeds and the corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, harbour the stranger and needy, visit the sick, minister to prisoners and captives, visit the fatherless and widows, bury the dead. (2) Intercession and the spiritual works of mercy: to instruct the ignorant, correct offenders, counsel the doubtful, comfort the afflicted, suffer injuries with patience, forgive offences and wrongs, pray for others. 3. Its scope and limit. (1) It is to be universal in its scope, reaching even to our enemies (Matt. v. 43-48; Luke x. 29-38). (2) Its limit: we are to love our neighbour as ourself; not more—a warning to those who neglect the cultivation of their own spiritual life for the active ministrations of Church work; but not less—a warning to those who think only of the needs of their own soul.—*A. G. Mortimer, D.D.*

*Motives to universal charity.*—1. Wouldst thou love all mankind as thy brethren, rejoice in them and think of them with complacency, say sometimes to thyself, "God loves them; He designs their good; He showers His benefits upon them; He rejoices in them as the work of His hands, as His creatures, His children; He beholds them with complacency." 2. Wouldst thou love all mankind as thy brethren, rejoice in them all, and think on them with complacency and esteem: in the judgment that thou passest on them be not biassed either by the homeliness of their figure, or the meanness of their

apparel, or the humble situation in which they are placed, or by single actions, foolish or wicked, which they commit. Nothing of this detracts from the inherent worth of the man, his native grandeur and dignity, his essential excellences. 3. Wouldst thou awaken and confirm in thy soul the principle of love, inward, cordial love towards all mankind, as towards thy neighbours, frequently resolve in thy mind the various and generally useful connexions in which they all stand with thee and with human society at large. Not one is entirely useless, or absolutely and in all respects injurious to society, and no one can or will be so at all times and in every situation. 4. Wouldst thou excite and cherish in thy heart this universal charity, judge, esteem thy brethren, mankind, not merely by what at present, in this their infant state, they are and afford, but by what in all future times on every higher step of their existence they may and will be and afford.—*G. J. Zollkofer.*

Vers. 32-34. *The excellence of the moral law.*—I. **The great practical duties of the law are supremely excellent.**—1. They are good for their own sake; whereas the institutions of the ceremonial law were good only as means to an end. 2. They can be performed only by a renewed heart; whereas the institutions of the ceremonial law may be performed by the most abandoned of mankind.

II. **They are such as must commend themselves to the conscience of every candid inquirer.**—1. Are they reasonable? What can be more reasonable than that we should love Him who is infinitely lovely, and who has so loved us as even to give His only dear Son to die for us? 2. Are they conducive to our happiness? Wherein does the happiness of heaven consist but in the exercise of love? 3. Are they perfective of our nature? The want of love is that which debases us even lower than the beasts that perish. No words can describe the full malignity



of such a state. But let a principle of love possess our souls, and it instantly refines all our feelings, regulates all our dispositions, and transforms us into the very image of our God. 4. Are they instrumental to the honouring of God? We know of no other way in which God can be honoured, because these two commandments comprehend the whole of our duty. But by abounding in a regard to these we may and do honour Him.

**III. An approbation of them argues a state of mind favourable to the reception of the gospel.**—When there is a readiness to approve the boundless extent of these commandments, there must of necessity be—1. An openness to be convinced of our lost estate. 2. A willingness to embrace the offers of salvation. 3. A readiness to receive and improve the aids of God's Spirit. —*C. Simeon.*

Ver. 34. *Not far from the kingdom.*—

**I. What is it to be near the kingdom?**—There are habits of life, traits of character which bring us nigh—1. A moral life. 2. Interest in religion. The Holy Spirit guides all sincere seekers of truth. 3. Knowledge of Scriptures. This is a long step nearer Christ. The seed lies ready for the sun and rain.

**II. What is it to be in the kingdom?**—1. Answer supplied in narrative. To know that to love God and man is more than all mere rites is to be near the kingdom. To have that love in the heart is to be in the kingdom. 2. To enter the kingdom love must be shed abroad in the heart. This love enters when we believe God's love to us. The last step into the kingdom is then faith—belief in God's love to me. God's love enters the soul like a cascade, as we believe it. Then rises up our love to God, like the spray, the vapour-cloud of the fall, that fills our life with beauty, as the mossy banks of the cascade are full of flowers and ferns. Our love to God is the return of God's love to its source. This love shews itself to our neighbour; if not, it does not exist.

**III. Why do men not go all the way?**—1. They love some secret evil. A hidden anchor holds the vessel when the tide is flowing. 2. They are not in earnest. It is necessary to "strive." 3. They procrastinate; they lack the final act of decision; they miss the flood-tide which would have led to salvation.

**IV. The responsibility of stopping short.**—1. It is full of danger. To feel "near the kingdom" breeds the presumption, "I can enter any time." Where despair of salvation slays one soul, presumption slays a thousand. 2. The position cannot be maintained; the habits of life, the traits of character, which bring us near, will fade, unless we ask Christ to guard them. We shall drift farther every year from heaven. 3. It is fatal. "To be almost saved is to be altogether lost."—*J. H. Hodson.*

*Nearness not possession.*—It is with the kingdom of God as with other kingdoms—kingdoms both objective and subjective—to be almost in possession is not sufficient. A man may be almost in possession of a fortune, but that adds not to his credit at the bank. A man may be almost honest or almost sober, but that will be no recommendation to a position of trust and responsibility. And as with these, so with the kingdoms of mental force, health, and social influence; nearness is not sufficient.

**I. A man is not necessarily in the kingdom of God because an intelligent inquirer.**—Christ does not shrink from being questioned; but let us discriminate between questioning with a view to information and questioning with a view to disputation. Moreover it is worthy of notice that when Christ pronounces upon a man's condition that man does not farther presume upon his mere knowledge. "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." What then? "No man after that durst ask Him any question."

**II. A man is not necessarily in the kingdom of God because he knows truth when he hears it.**—Twice over

in the narrative we find this scribe tacitly saying Amen to the utterances of Christ. But a man may do that and yet have no affection for Christ as Saviour. This man was thoroughly orthodox. But it is quite possible to make a false god of orthodoxy. At all events theoretical orthodoxy is not enough. A man may be ready "to stand up for the truth," nay, ready to die for it, and yet be only "not far from the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. xiii. 3).

### III. A man is not necessarily in the

kingdom of God because he can answer questions bearing upon Christianity.—

We fear that not a little confidence is reposed in questions having only a very remote bearing upon religion. A man may know the creed without knowing the Christ, and the catechism while yet he knows nothing of charity. Farther, a man may answer according to the letter of Scripture and yet be only "not far from the kingdom of God." We must repent, confess, believe, and serve.—*J. S. Swan.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 35—37.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxii. 41-46; LUKE xx. 41-44.)

*Our Lord's question concerning the Messiah.*—I. The place where He propounded His question. Why did He choose such a public place as the Temple to oppose the scribes' opinion and doctrine? That by putting them to silence in such open manner He might bring the greater shame and disgrace upon them and their doctrine, they being malicious enemies of the truth; and withal that He might gain the more credit and authority with the people to His own person and doctrine. 1. In that Christ used so much to frequent the Temple, being a public place, whither all sorts of people much resorted, to the end He might there have occasion of doing the more good, both by His doctrine and miracles, as also by reforming abuses there, and by opposing and refuting errors: hence observe that we also ought to take the best opportunities of time, place, and persons, where and amongst whom we may do most good, and bring most glory to God, in our place and calling. 2. In that Christ was now teaching in the Temple, and so used to be much and often at other times to teach the people there publicly: hence learn whither to resort if we would hear Christ and be partakers of His doctrine, viz. to the public place of God's worship. 3. In that Christ did not only teach and deliver sound doctrine in the Temple at this time, but did also oppose erroneous doctrine: hence gather that ministers of the Word are not only in their public ministry to teach true and sound doctrine, but also to oppose and confute contrary errors, as occasion is offered (Tit. i. 9, 11).

II. The manner of Christ's opposing and confuting the opinion of the scribes.—1. He propounds their opinion and questions the truth of it. (1) That He might by this means take occasion to confute and overthrow that common and gross error held not only by the scribes and Pharisees, but also by the greatest part of the other Jews, touching the person of the Messiah. (2) That by this means He might have occasion to confirm the faith of His disciples in the truth and doctrine of His Godhead. (3) Having lately commended one of the scribes for answering discreetly, therefore now He takes occasion to propound this question, thereby to stir up both that scribe and others also to a diligent search after the true knowledge of the Messiah. 2. He object against them a place of Scripture. (1) All errors, and erroneous opinions and doctrines of men, in matters of faith and religion, are to be opposed and confuted by Scripture, and by grounds and reasons taken from thence. (2) The prophets of the Old Testament spoke of Christ the true Messiah, and

of His kingdom and glory, and the manifestation of it, long before it was fulfilled. (3) The writers of Holy Scripture were extraordinarily directed and assisted by the Holy Ghost. 3. He applies those words of David to His purpose. (1) The Person who is said here to have called and advanced Christ to this high degree of glory and authority, viz. God the Father. (2) The Person called and advanced to this glory—Christ the true Messiah. (a) There is a distinction of Persons in the Godhead, though but one God in nature and essence. (b) The truth of Christ's Godhead, in that David calls Him his Lord. (c) The nature of true faith—to make particular application of Christ to the believer. "My Lord." (d) How we ought to receive and embrace Christ—not only as Redeemer and Saviour, but also as Lord and Master. (3) The ground or cause of Christ's advancement to this glory, viz. the eternal purpose and decree of God the Father, ordaining and appointing Him unto it. (4) The advancement itself. (a) To the highest degree of glory, honour, and dignity, next unto God the Father. (b) To the full possession and administration of His kingdom and government over the world, and especially over His true Church.—*G. Petter.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 35, 36. *Faith can reconcile apparent opposites.*—Faith alone, which knows what Christ is by His Divine nature, and what He is become by His mercy, knows how to reconcile the seeming contradictions which are in this Divine compound, God-man: Son of David, by His birth according to the flesh; and Lord of David, by His eternal birth in God His Father, as also by the rights of His third birth, namely, His resurrection, which placed Him at the right hand of His Father.—*P. Quesnel.*

*A counter-question.*—Thus the Saviour intimates it is not robbery to claim equality with God, and intimates that no merely human Saviour would meet the deep wants of man.

**I. In all ages men have longed for a Divine and human Saviour,**—one who, as man, would be near and sympathetic; as God, omnipotent and enduring. David's psalm is a clear expression of what all religious men have dreamed of. An incarnation of a helpful God is the hope of the Hindoo peoples.

**II. None less than God can be a spiritual and eternal Saviour.**—We want a son of David, but one whose name is "Lord," and whose natural seat is "at God's right hand."—*R. Glover.*

*masses.*—All through the Gospels there are indications of Christ's popularity with the masses as distinguished from the classes. Why? Where lay the charm? In the aspect, the matter, the spirit of the Man? Perhaps in all together. It is difficult to give a full account of popularity, to explain why one man can do what he wills with an audience, while another is utterly helpless. There may be subtle physical causes at work, as well as intellectual and moral ones. But the thing is not altogether a mystery; the teacher's power can be explained in part. Looks count for something—the kindling eye, the play of thought and emotion in the face. A genial manner goes a long way to conciliate favour, revealing itself in a kindly smile and a warm, hearty tone of utterance. But the secret of power lies mainly in what a man says—in his thoughts as a revelation of himself, his convictions embodied in speech. Eloquence is not an affair of manner or of style or of gesture; it is the whole man—all that is within—speaking out: the mind, heart, soul, spirit, finding utterance for itself in words. It is this on which the Evangelists remark in reference to Christ's power over His audience (see Luke iv. 22; Matt. vii. 28, 29).—*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*

Ver. 37. *Christ's popularity with the*



## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 38—40.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxiii. 13-39; LUKE xx. 45-47.)

*Character and conduct of scribes denounced.*—I. Their loud professions of sanctity and their ostentatious devotions are censured. Long prayers may sometimes be the outcome of deep feeling and many needs; they may, as in the case of the scribes, be a cloak for sin. Long robes, like long prayers, may be a profession with which nothing spiritual corresponds.

II. Their love of pre-eminence is blamed.—Both in “Church and State” they loved to be supreme, and in all social relations they sought the honour which cometh from man.

III. Their cruel rapacity is held up to obloquy.—The bereaved and defenceless were their victims.

IV. Christ predicts the condemnation of such sinners, and at the same time puts the people on their guard against them.—Against the wrongs and cruelties, the assumptions and errors of such pretenders, the Good Shepherd would fain protect His feeble and defenceless sheep.—*J. R. Thomson.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 38-40. *Needful cautions.*—I. In that our Lord warns the common people, and His own disciples too, to beware of following the evil and corrupt life and example of the scribes, we may gather that there is much danger of infection to the people of God by the evil and corrupt lives of such as are called to be public pastors and teachers of the Church, when they do not live answerably to this calling, but loosely, profanely,

wickedly. 2. Christians must take heed of being corrupted by the evil example and practice of such as are outwardly called to the ministerial office, and yet are men of corrupt and vicious life. Though they may and ought to hear the doctrine preached by such, and to embrace and follow it, so far as they preach the truth (Matt. xxiii. 3), yet they must beware of following the evil example and practice of such pastors.—*G. Petter.*

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 41—44.

(PARALLEL: LUKE xxi. 1-4.)

*A celebrated contribution.*—The “collection” is generally considered to be commonplace. Jesus, in this passage, clothed it with sublimity. He immortalised the famous farthing. The two mites are transformed into two angels, and they seem to watch over the contribution chest of the Church as the cherubim did over the Ark of the Covenant. Jesus was memorable for seeing the many in the one, the much in the little, the sublime in the simple. The smallest act may embody the greatest principle. The mites of the poor widow rise to the transcendent height of latent martyrdom—“even all her living.” She gave all that her life depended upon. One step more and the gift would have been life.

I. True religion is sometimes under disadvantageous circumstances to develop itself.—1. True religion is to be developed. Piety is composite, consisting of principle and action. As rays to the sun, branches to the tree, the stream to the fountain, so conduct is to the heart, its natural and necessary outcome. 2. The possessor of true religion is sometimes unfortunately situated.

The condition of woman, and especially of a widow, in the East was deplorable. Her portion was oppression. 3. Contrast between principles and position makes the development of religion difficult. The widow had the will, but not the means, to give. She was a princess in heart, but a pauper in hand.

II. True religion will develop itself in spite of adverse circumstances.—This “poor widow” displayed—1. Consciousness of ability to give. God created all beings with the power to realise the design of their existence. This is pre-eminently true of man. He has soul, will, affections, emotions, conscience, body, privileges, motives, and example. 2. Conviction of duty to give. Every one under the law was commanded to give. None was exempted. The principle still remains under the new dispensation. Individual effort is everlasting. No proxy in religion. “Follow *thou* Me.” 3. Practical promptitude to give. She contributed gloriously, and the tinkling of her tiny tokens has reverberated throughout the universe. The making power of the two mites has been felt in all the collections of Christendom ever since.

III. The display of true religion in spite of adverse circumstances wins the hearty commendation of Christ.—Christ reports a farthing. He is alone in this. The sum was small, but it was an indication of profound feeling and great sacrifice. It was full of self-denial. The others of their much gave a little, but she of her little gave all. There was no suffering in their offerings. Religion was secondary to riches. Gold superseded God. If there is no sacrifice in our deeds, they are valueless in a moral sense. The widow went her way after depositing her gift, and probably never knew that she was observed. Perhaps it will be so with thee. Do thy best and thou shalt reap. Do thy best in the family, the business, the school, the Church, the world. Time is short. Work is urgent. Recompense is sure.—*B. D. Johns.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 41. *The Church treasury.*—

I. The Church treasury.—1. Its supreme importance. The Church can no more succeed without its treasury than can a mill, factory, workshop, farm, or store. (1) Church edifices can neither be built nor maintained without money. (2) The ministry is sustained by the treasury. (3) All the benevolent work of the Church waits on the treasury. 2. The treasury measures the love of Christ's people for Him. Self-sacrifice. Money is the principal representative of value.

II. The people who cast money into it.—1. “The multitude.” “None empty.” “Every one lay by,” etc. 2. Jesus saw how much, etc. 3. *How* rather than what. “Cheerful giver.” “Willing mind.” Many gave from purse only; she from heart. Custom—love.

Vers. 42-44. *The greatness of the widow's gift.*—I. The greatness of a

gift cannot be determined by its absolute amount; it can be truly ascertained only by a moral standard.

—1. The first index on this moral standard points to the ability to bestow. The widow had given more than the wealthy in proportion to her ability. Their contributions were as much less than their living as the widow's mites, which were “all her living,” were less than their gifts of gold. And, even while they stood at the Temple, their servants were busy in their rich dwellings, preparing savoury viands against their masters' return. But the widow's habitation was desolate in her absence; the fire had gone out upon her hearth; and she must return not to a luxurious feast, but to an empty board. In such circumstances abundant indeed was her contribution. 2. A second mark upon this standard indicates the disposition that prompts the gift. There may be no generosity in the most magnificent

bequest, while a soul overflowing with love may accompany the humblest present. Here indeed is a sense in which her offering was greater than those of the worldlings. It was greater in her own soul. Small indeed was their gift in the estimation of their own secret thought. Inferior was its weight in the scales of conscience, but great and glorious the integrity and joyfulness of the widow's spirit. 3. There is still another index on this moral standard which determines the greatness of a gift. This index points to the good effect resulting from the gift. How many hearts has this lofty spirit of the poor widow, thus celebrated by Christ, inspired with the same self-forgotten love and impelled to the same noble conduct! Viewed in its ultimate influence, then, her gift was greater than theirs; and, thus regarded, we may even say it was absolutely greater. For if we consider all the effects of her example in cherishing a true benevolence and leading others to be bountiful even the sum of the rich men's benefactions would dwindle and fade into nothing before the greatness and splendour of offerings devoted to the cause of religion which have grown, as an immense harvest from invisible seed, out of the widow's mites. She gave not only to the Temple at Jerusalem, but to every Christian temple under the heaven whose foundations have since been laid. By a single act of self-denial she has been charitable to the whole world; and for what she did, in humility and sorrow that she could do no more, the whole world will confess itself under obligations and be grateful.

**II. This subject naturally suggests an absolute truth, apart from the particular case presented in the text.**

—1. We may say, generally, it is not great but small things, not imposing but humble deeds, that make up the great sum of good influence. Look at all the great associations for the support of government, education, philanthropy, religion. It is not the talents, but the mites, by which they are

nourished. 2. In regard to our own characters we may say the mites are more than the talents. It is not what we think and feel and do on extraordinary occasions that makes the bulk of character, but the silent and steady accumulation of our every-day desires and motives and habits of life. Religion consists not in spasmodic efforts, but persevering industry—not in doing much at one time, but all we can at all times. Think not thy little, if it be all thou canst, will be despised: think not thy much, if it be less than thy ability, will be accepted.—*C. A. Bartol.*

*Unconscious fame.*—She knew not that any had seen it: for the knowledge of eyes turned on her, even His, would have flushed with shame the pure cheek of her love; and any word, conscious notice, or promise would have marred and turned aside the rising incense of her sacrifice. But to all time has it remained in the Church, like the perfume of Mary's alabaster that filled the house, this deed of self-denying sacrifice. More, far more, than the great gifts of their "superfluity," which the rich cast in, was, and is to all time, the gift of absolute self-surrender and sacrifice, tremblingly offered by the solitary mourner. And though He spake not to her, yet the sunshine of His words must have fallen into the dark desolateness of her heart; and though perhaps she knew not why, it must have been a happy day of rich feast in the heart when she gave up "her whole living" unto God. And so perhaps is every sacrifice for God all the more blessed when we know not of its blessedness.—*A. Edersheim, D.D.*

*Uncoined charity.*—The humblest and feeblest among us may cast in their mite wherever there is a sick bedside to be prayed by, ignorance to be enlightened, or misery to be relieved. There are many widows still among us in heart like her who left her all in the treasury. May their useful and estimable class extend and persevere! True to their principles of



doing all unto the Lord, and of giving in secret, may no apprehension of the scorn of the world, nor any misgiving of their doing good because the good they do seems small in amount, check their hands or chill their hearts: many a midnight prayer ascends for them from sleepless but grateful sufferers, many a blessing poured forth for them by helpless lips is registered on high; and still, when the Lord looks up to view how men are filling His treasury, He sees certain poor widows casting in thither their mites; and passing by unheeded the rich men's gifts, He fixes on them the praise of real charity.—*R. L. Browne.*

*A rule of giving for the rich.*—Different circumstances require different management, and there is a way of coming up to the poor widow's attainments without doing exactly as she did. If a rich man were to give away his whole estate, and reduce himself to poverty or to hard labour, this would not only be doing as much, but a great deal more than the poor widow did; for she did not make any such great change in her circumstances, nor did she sink her state or condition at all lower than before. Her example therefore, or our Lord's applauding it, is of no force as to obliging any one to throw himself out of that rank, station, or condition of life wherein God has placed him. Nor does the instance of the text oblige a man, when in a thriving way, to dispose of all the overplus, all the clear gains, at the year's end: for how then could he go on to support that rank and station he is in, and to provide for his family?

The poor widow might, by what she did, straiten herself for a day or two, and after that be in as good a condition as she was before. But were any trading or thriving men to give away all their increase, they would soon find their affairs run backwards, and would not be able to recover them. Well, then, how must we state the case with a rich man to make it answer to this in the text? The rule of proportion, I conceive, is this: that the richer sort, in order to give the more away in charity, should be content to practise some degree of self-denial, in like manner as the poor widow did. Let them retrench unnecessary expenses at least, abridge their pleasures, shorten their diversions, cut off as much as possible from the pomp and pride of life, to spend upon the poor. Besides this, let them not be oversolicitous as to futurities, providing handsomely for their children, or raising their families. The poor widow trusted God for her own necessary subsistence rather than make no offering at all to the treasury. And thus much at least may be expected of every man: that he contribute according to his perfect circumstances; and that no anxiety, either for himself or his children after him, ever hinder him from doing in proportion to what he at present enjoys. Be content with a moderate provision rather than grow covetous and defraud the poor; for, after all, God's providence is the best security and His friendship the richest treasure we can have.—*Archdeacon Waterland.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 2. "*At the season.*"—That was when the clusters were ripe, or perhaps it means the usually arranged period when the tenants, having gathered their grapes, and pressed their clusters, and sold their casks of wine, were able to pay the agreed amount of the profits. The plan seems to resemble the system called *métayer* in France, where the landowner supplies the land and seed, etc., according to an agreement, and the labourer supplies the culture, and at harvest-time

receives for himself two-thirds of the crop, and pays over the other third to the landowner.

Vers. 3-9. *Insecurity of life in unsettled times.*—The insecurity of life is reflected by the fierce lawlessness of the peasants who had possession of the vineyard; for that must have been a wild time of which it could be said that they beat, stabbed, or stoned both bands of slaves, ending by kill-

ing even the householder's son. Nor is it a less vivid indication of general social demoralisation to find the injured owner represented as coming and destroying the criminals, without any reference of the matter to a court of law. The parable must be true to possibilities, else it would have failed to impress, and hence may be accepted as implying a very unsettled state of society in Palestine in those days, at least in districts away from Roman posts. The hideous misery entailed on the whole land by the long civil wars of local pretenders, and, still more, by the awful struggles of the rival claimants to the throne of the world, had brought over wide regions, not in Palestine alone, but in every province of the all-embracing Roman Empire, a dissolution of society, and the destruction of once flourishing communities, which made it the great task of the peaceful age of Augustus to rebuild ruined cities, to bring back to cultivation provinces once filled with a thriving population and rich in all rural industries, to repress and extirpate the lawlessness following in the train of such prolonged social convulsions, and to restore order and the sanctities of a secure public and private life. Over Palestine and Western Asia, including Asia Minor, there was, in fact, a state of things to redress which in a measure anticipated that of the civilised world at large in the fifth century, when the safest retreat of robbers, or the most lonely haunt of the solitary monk fleeing from the evils of the world, was in the ruins of what had not long before been a rich and populous city. Or, if we seek a parallel in modern history, there was such a state of things as remained over Central Europe after the close of the Thirty Years' War, the scars and ruin of which are not even yet effaced, after nearly two hundred and fifty years.—*C. Geikie, D.D.*

*Ingratitude.*—At the battle of the Alma, in September 1854, a wounded Russian was calling piteously for water. Captain Eddington, whose heart was kind and charitable, ran to him, and, stooping, gave him a drink. The wounded man revived. The captain ran forward to rejoin his regiment, when the wretch fired and shot him who had befriended him in time of need.

*Vers. 6, 7. God's longsuffering.*—The axe carried before the Roman consuls was always bound up in a bundle of rods. An old author tells us that "the rods were tied up with knotted cords, and that when an offender was condemned to be punished the executioner would untie the knots one by one, and meanwhile the magistrate would look the culprit in the face, to observe any signs of repentance and watch his words, to see if he could find a motive for mercy; and thus justice went to its work deliberately and without passion." The axe was enclosed

in rods to shew that the extreme penalty was never inflicted till milder means had failed; first the rod, and the axe only as a terrible necessity.

*Divine forbearance.*—The Macedonian king, Alexander the Great, who, as in one triumphal march, conquered the world, observed a very singular custom in his method of carrying on war. Whenever he encamped with his army before a fortified city and laid siege to it, he caused to be set up a great lantern, which was kept lighted by day and night. This was a signal to the besieged, and what it meant was that as long as the lamp burned they had time to save themselves by surrender, but that when once the light should be extinguished, the city, and all that were in it, would be irrevocably given over to destruction. And the conqueror kept his word with terrible consistency. When the light was put out, and the city was not given up, all hope of mercy was over. The Macedonians stormed the place, and if it was taken all were cut to pieces who were capable of bearing arms, and there was no quarter or forgiveness possible. Now it is the good pleasure of our God to have compassion and to shew mercy. But a city or a people can arrive at such a pitch of moral corruption that the moral order of the world can only be saved by its destruction. It was so with the whole race of men at the time of the Flood, with Sodom and Gomorrah at a later period, and with the Jewish people in our Saviour's time. But before the impending stroke of judgment fell God always, so to speak, set up the lamp of grace, which was not only a signal of mercy, but also a light to shew men that they were in the way of death, and a power to turn them from it.

*God's final effort.*—I remember one of the poets hath an ingenious fancy to express the Passion, wherewith he found himself overcome after a long resistance—that "the God of love had shot all His golden arrows at him, but could never pierce his heart, till at length he put *Himself* into the bow, and dated Himself straight into his breast." Methinks this doth some way adumbrate God's method of dealing with men. He had long contended with a stubborn world, and thrown down many a blessing upon them; and when all His other gifts could not prevail, He at last made a gift of Himself, to testify His affections and to engage theirs (Isa. v. 4; Rom. viii. 32; Heb. i. 3; Tit. ii. 14).—*H. Scougal.*

*Christ's reception from men.*—Surely a servant of the government may risk himself in the very heart of a convict prison alone, if he is the bearer of a royal pardon for all the inmates. In such a case it would not be necessary to look out for a man of rare courage who might dare to carry the proclamation to the convicts. Give him but the message of free pardon, and he may go

in unarmed with all safety, like Daniel in the den of lions. When Christ Himself came to the world—the great convict prison of the universe—came the Ambassador from God, bringing peace—they said: “This is the heir; come, let us kill Him!” He came unto His own, and His own received Him not, and the servant is not greater than his Lord.

Ver. 9. *Responsibility.*—Daniel Webster was once called upon at a dinner-party in his own house to specify what one thing he had met with in life which had done most for him or had contributed most to his success. After a moment he replied, “The most fruitful and elevating influence I have ever seemed to meet with has been my impression of responsibility to God.”

Ver. 10. “*The headstone of the corner*” is a keystone. A keystone is the wedge-shaped stone which keys or binds together the sides of an arch at its top. There is an ancient story that the Temple-builders, in absence of the architect, threw away a keystone because of its peculiar shape. It would not fit anywhere in the walls. Finally its proper place was found, and it was raised to the top of the arch. “The stone which the builders rejected became the head of the corner,” the keystone of the arch. A beautiful illustration, frequently used, of the rejection and exaltation of Christ. The rejection adds lustre to the glory. Every rejection of Christ turns out the same way: whether rejected by Caiaphas, or Nero, or Voltaire or Paris Commune, He is ever found, ever raised, ever placed higher in the fabric, the headstone of the arch. He has no other place. He fits nowhere else. He is not one fine stone along with the rest, Confucius, Buddha, and Mahomet. He is the keystone, different in kind from the rest. This or nothing. His place is at the top. The whole fabric of history holds Him up to view. He binds together the arch. Without Him the arch must fall in. Without Him the arch is an unsolved problem. He is the keystone; He solves the problem and locks the arch. He is the keystone of history. Previous history comes up to Him on one side, and subsequent history on the other side, and He unites them. He is the centre of history. He is the keystone of religion. Religion is the arch which bridges the chasm between heaven and earth. The God-man touches each side: His Divinity touches the heaven side, His humanity touches the earth side, and the arch is completed, the bridge is effected.

Ver. 16. *God's image stamped on man.*—We can often tell what a thing is for by noticing its make. The instructed eye of an anatomist will, from a bone, divine the sphere in which the creature to whom it belonged was intended to live. Just as

plainly as gills or lungs, fins or wings, or legs and arms declare the element in which the creature that possesses them is intended to move, so plainly stamped upon all our natures is this, that God is our Lord, since we are made in a true sense in His image, and that only in Him can we find rest. If you take a coin, and compare it with the die from which it has been struck, you will find that wherever in the die there is a relief, in the coin there is a sunken place, and conversely. So there are not only resemblances in man to the Divine nature which bear upon them the manifest marks of his destiny, but there are correspondences, wants, on our side, being met by gifts upon His; hollow emptiness in us being filled, when we are brought into contact with Him, by the abundance of His outstanding supplies and gifts.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*The defacement of God's image in man.*—You sometimes get into your hands money on which there has been stamped, by mischief, or for some selfish purpose, the name of some one else than the king's or queen's which surrounds the head upon it. And in like manner our nature has gone through the stamping-press again, and another likeness has been deeply imprinted upon it. The image of God, which every man has, is in some senses and aspects ineffaceable by any course of conduct of theirs. But in another aspect it is not like the permanent similitude stamped upon the solid metal of the penny, but like the reflexion, rather, that falls upon some polished plate, or that is cast upon the white sheet from a lantern. If the polished plate be rusty and stained, the image is faint and indistinct; if it be turned away from the light, the image passes. And that is what some of you are doing. By living to yourselves, by living day in and day out without ever remembering God, by yielding to passions, lusts, ambitions, low desires, and the like, you are doing your very best to scratch out the likeness which still lingers in your nature.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 17. *Religion and business.*—Have you, a Christian, two sources of happiness—God and the world? Then you are wrong, for to you God ought to be in all the world that you appropriate, and all the world God's. Do you use the adjectives “spiritual” and “secular” in describing your enjoyments? Is prayer spiritual, that is the Great Spirit's gift, while an evening in a picture-gallery is secular, that is man's gift? Why, God gives the latter as truly as the former. If you are living on the high plane of your privilege, you see God in all things that you are permitted to build into your life. Have you spiritual needs, as for instance help in resisting temptation, and secular needs, such as help in sickness? There is only One Helper everywhere. You watch against



temptation—and pray; you call the physician in sickness—and ought also to pray. Are you able to manage the mortgage alone, but unable, as you think, to save your soul? In fact you, without God, are as powerless in the one case as the other; you cannot cross your office threshold without Him, nor sign a draft. There are not two worlds here below to the Christian, one God's realm and the other man's. He is all in all. Colloquially it is harmless, but in the secret heart it is wicked to distinguish to oneself between spiritual and temporal possessions. Your faith and love are God's, and so your house, your gold. Men say business is business and religion is religion. No. Business is religion and religion is business.—*E. J. Haynes.*

Vers. 18-27. *Universal belief in immortality.*—Almost every religion which has gathered adherents from among the different tribes of men has not only affirmed the doctrine of a future life, but has inculcated it if not as a basis of morality, as a promise of reward for virtue and right living. "In all the leading nations of the earth the doctrine is a tradition handed down from immemorial antiquity, embalmed in sacred books which are regarded as infallible revelations." You will find it in some form as well in the ancient religions as in those of later times. Brahminism teaches it; so does Mohammedanism. It forms part of the Confucian theology, and is one of the chief features of the revelation of Christianity. Amid the apparent Nihilism and Atheism of the teaching of Buddha there are gleams of light on the great problem of an immortal future. The Zendavesta unfolds a state beyond death in which man's destiny is the consequent result of character; and when the Persians decorated the splendid walls of Persepolis, they embodied in sculpture the dominant dogma of their faith—the doctrine of everlastingness. In the theology and religious symbolism of ancient Egypt the doctrine of immortality held a most conspicuous place. It was not a dream of the Egyptian priesthood, but a fixed and firm persuasion of the people. And the natives embalmed their dead not merely to preserve them from putrefaction, but as significant of eternal continuance. When we come to Greece and Rome, we find the idea so mixed up with all that is best in the literature of these great nations that we cannot help seeing how largely it affected the faith and hope of the leaders of learning, philosophy, and religion. The best of the Greek poets caught sight in imagination of their favourite heroes transported beyond the waves of death's dark river—immortal in a land of life. They sang of the Elysian plains, where the *εἰδωλα κακόντων*—the shadowy images of the dead—moved in a world of shadows, and of "the Islands of the Blest where Achilles

and Tydides unlaced the helmets from their flowing hair." It has been thought that the organisation of the Greek mysteries was the outcome of the nation's best aspirations for immortal life. The conception of an immortal future so possessed the best of Rome's philosophers and orators that they declared the troubles of life unworthy to be borne "unless man had within himself the assurance of an after-destiny." Cicero represents Cato as thus addressing his young friends Scipio and Lælius; "No one shall persuade me, Scipio, that your worthy father, or your grandfathers, Paulus and Africanus, or many other excellent men whom I need not name, performed so many actions to be remembered by posterity without being sensible that futurity was their right. And if I may be allowed an old man's privilege to speak for myself, can you imagine that I should have submitted to so much painful toil by night and by day, in the forum, in the Senate, and in the field, had I apprehended that my existence and reputation were to terminate with this life? But . . . I feel myself transported with delight at the thought of again seeing and joining your father, whom on earth I highly respected and dearly loved. . . . Oh! glorious day when I shall be admitted into the assembly of the wise and the good, . . . when amidst the happy throng of the immortals I shall find thee also, my son, my Cato, best, most amiable of men." Seneca—one of Rome's greatest philosophers—writing to Marcia to console her on the loss of her son, says: "The sacred assembly of the Scipios and Catos, who have themselves despised life, and obtained freedom by death, shall welcome the youth to the region of happy souls." Centuries before that Cyrus, addressing his sons, as he lay on the bed of death, had given utterance to the same assurance: "Do not imagine, oh, my dear children! that when I leave you I shall cease to exist. For even when I was yet with you my spirit you could not discern; but that it animated this body you were fully assured by the actions I performed. Be assured that it will continue the same, though you see it not. I can never suffer myself to be persuaded that man lives only while he is in the body, and dies when it is dissolved, or that the soul loses all intelligence on being separated from an unintelligent lump of clay; but rather that on being liberated from all mixture with the body, pure and entire, it enters upon its true intellectual existence." In the *Phædo* Plato describes Socrates as calmly discussing with his friends, in his last moments, the conditions of the immortal state into which he was about to enter. "Those," he says, "who have passed through life with peculiar sanctity of manners are received on high into a pure region, where they live without their bodies to all eternity, in a series of

joys and delights which cannot be described." When some reference was made to the interment that was to follow the fatal draught, he replied: "You may bury me if you can catch me." And then, with a smile, and with an intonation of unfathomable tenderness, he added: "Do not call this poor body Socrates. When I have drunk the poison I shall leave you, and go to the joys of the blessed. I would not have you sorrow at my hard lot, or say at the interment, 'Thus we lay out Socrates'; or, 'Thus we follow him to the grave, or bury him.' Be of good cheer; say that you are burying my body only."

Ver. 27. *Heaven the land of the living.*—A dying lady once said to her brother who was about to take his leave of her without any hope of seeing her again in this world: "Brother, I trust we shall meet in the land of the living. We are now in the land of the dying."

Ver. 30. *Love, the most important thing.*—"Father," asked the son of Bishop Berkeley, "what is the meaning of the words 'cherubim' and 'seraphim,' which we meet with in the Bible?" "Cherubim," replied his father, "is a Hebrew word, signifying knowledge; seraphim is another word of the same language, signifying flame. Whence it is supposed that the cherubim are angels who excel in knowledge, and that the seraphim are angels likewise who excel in loving God." "I hope, then," said the little boy, "when I die I shall be a seraph, for I would rather love God than know all things."

Ver. 31. *Loving neighbour as self.*—A good old clergyman, living on the borders of Salisbury Plain, was admired by his bishop for having performed "the greatest act of charity of which he had ever heard." It will amuse you to hear what that act was. When the Rev. Samuel Settle—for that was his name—required a new suit of clothes, he used to send for the parish tailor to measure him; and when the number of inches had been correctly noted down, he would add, "Make the things a size larger than the measure, Grant." Did he like his clothes very loose, do you think? Not a bit of it; but his reverence was a particularly small man, and the poor old parishioner to whom he usually gave his cast-off garments was a *size larger*. Now do you see the reason for the order to the tailor, and do you wonder at the bishop's praise? Which of us would choose our coats or dresses to suit another person? Verily good old Mr. Settle—now gone to his rest—did love his neighbour as himself.

Ver. 34. *"Not far from the kingdom."*—When, after safely circumnavigating the globe, the *Royal Charter* went to pieces in

Moelfra Bay, on the coast of Wales, it was my melancholy duty (says one) to visit and seek to comfort the wife of the first officer, made by that calamity a widow. The ship had been telegraphed from Queenstown, and the lady was sitting in her parlour expecting her husband, with the table spread for his evening meal, when the messenger came to tell her he was drowned. Never can I forget the grief, so stricken and tearless, with which she rung my hand, as she said, "So near home, and yet lost!"

*Half a point off the course.*—Almost is not sufficient. A gentleman crossing the English Channel stood near the helmsman. It was a calm and pleasant evening, and no one dreamed of a possible danger to their good ship. But a sudden flapping of a sail, as if the wind had shifted, caught the ear of the officer on watch, and he sprang at once to the wheel, examining closely the compass. "You are half a point off the course," he said sharply to the man at the wheel. The deviation was corrected, and the officer returned to his post. "You must steer very accurately," said the looker-on, "when only half a point is so much thought of." "Ah, half a point in many places might bring us directly on the rocks," he said. What avails being *almost* right, if destruction is the end?

Vers. 38, 39. *The Synagogue of Ambition.*—There is the Synagogue of Ambition, whose bond of union is the lust of place and of power. Let Diotrephes be its representative, who "loved to have the pre-eminence," and whom St. John censured for this ambitious temper, which tempted him, though nominally a member—perhaps a minister—of the early Church, violently to reject the best Christians. What are not men ready to do to gratify an inordinate and insatiate ambition! You know how the old Romans built their military roads. They projected them in a mathematical line, straight to the point of termination, and everything had to give way, there could be no deviation. And so on went the road, bridging rivers, filling up ravines, hewing down hills, levelling forests, cutting its way through every obstacle! Just so men set their lust upon self-emolument, some height of ambition, the attainment of place, rank, power, and hew their way toward it, not minding what gives way. No obstacle is insurmountable; health, happiness, home-comfort, honesty, integrity, conscience, the law of God, everything is sacrificed to the god of ambition.

Ver. 40. *A devourer of widows' houses.*—In the town of L— resided a prosperous and pious sadler. He had a wife, but no family; and at her entreaty he took into his home a boy, a relative of his own. The wife tended him, mothered him, taught him.

He learned the business, and grew up to his manhood. Before that time the wife became a confirmed invalid from rheumatism, and soon lay helpless in one room, when her husband was stricken with acute disease and lay dying in another. Under solemn promise to the dying man, and with great shew of piety, the young man secured that all the property should be left to him, solemnly pledging himself to care lovingly for that invalid wife to her last day. No sooner was the husband laid in his grave than that young man turned the poor invalid out of house and home, and even compelled her to find money among her friends with which to purchase the very furniture she brought to the home at her marriage. And, broken-hearted, the poor woman soon died in a stranger's shelter. They say that man is prosperous to-day. Who of us would change lots with that "devourer of widows' houses"?

*Prayers judged by weight, not length.*—God takes not men's prayers by tale, but by weight. He respecteth not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many there are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they are; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they are; nor the music of our prayers, the sweetness of our voice; nor the logic of our prayers, nor the method of them; but the divinity of our prayers is that which He so much esteemeth. He looketh not for any James with horny knees through assiduity in prayer; nor for any Bartholomew with a century of prayers for the morning, and as many for the evening; but St. Paul, his frequency of praying with fervency of spirit, without all tedious prolixities and vain babblings, this it is that God makes most account of. It is not a servant's going to and fro, but the despatch of his business, that pleases his master. It is not the loudness of a preacher's voice, but the holiness of the matter and the spirit of the preacher, that moves a wise and intelligent hearer. So here, not gifts, but graces in prayer, move the Lord. But these long prayers of the Pharisees were so much the worse because thereby they sought to entitle God to their sin, yea, they merely mocked Him, fleeing in His face.—*J. Trapp.*

Vers. 41, 42. *The widow's mites.*—In my pastorate at Wyoming, Pa., a brother Pettibone, since deceased, a man rich in faith, charity, and good works, cast five dollars into the church treasury every Lord's Day; a poor widow cast into the same treasury five cents each Sunday. She was very poor, and, to provide for her six fatherless children, took in washing every week. Brother Pattibone came to me one day, and asked me to say to this widow that the church officers felt she ought not to pay anything for the support of the church; and, he added, "tell

her that I will pay the five cents extra each week for her." I called, and performed my errand as delicately as I could; but never before or since did I learn a lesson that taught me, as I was then taught, what it meant to give. As she heard my story the tears came to her eyes, and she answered: "Do they want to take from me the comfort I experience in giving to the Lord? Think how much I owe to Him. My health is good, my children keep well, and I receive so many blessings I feel that I could not live if I did not make my little offering to Jesus each week." I left her humble dwelling, feeling that Providence had ordered the incident, to teach me a never-to-be-forgotten lesson, that giving is absolutely essential to true Christian discipleship and worship, and that our giving and all other acts of worship will be judged not by the amounts we give, nor the professions we make, but by the spirit, the motive of our giving and doing.—*R. W. Van Schaick.*

*The gifts of the poor.*—Jewish tradition, though it ever and painfully thrusts forward the *reward*, has some beautiful legends, allegories, and sayings about the gifts of the poor. One is to the effect that if one who is poor doeth charity, God says of him: "This one is preventing Me. He has kept My commandments before they have come to him. I must recompense him." In *Vayyikra*, R. 3, we read of a woman whose offering of a handful of flour the priest despised, when God admonished him in a dream to value the gift as highly as if she had offered herself. The tractate *Mena-choth* closes with these words: Alike as regards burnt offerings of beasts and those of fowls [those of the poor] and the meat offering, we find the expression "for a sweet savour," to teach us that to offer much or to offer little is the same, provided only that a person direct mind and heart toward God.—*A. Eidersheim, D.D.*

Vers. 43, 44. *Liberality must correspond with means.*—Sir Thomas Sutton, the founder of the Charter House, was one of the wealthiest merchants of his day. Fuller tells how he was overheard one day praying in his garden: "Lord, Thou hast given me a large and liberal estate; give me also a heart to make use of it."

Oracles are said to have more than once proclaimed that the hecatombs of noble oxen with gilded horns, that were offered up ostentatiously by the rich, were less pleasing to the gods than the wreaths of flowers and the modest, reverential worship of the poor. In general, however, the service of the Temple had little or no connexion with morals, and the change which Christianity effected in this respect was one of its most important benefits to mankind.—*W. E. H. Lecky.*



## CHAPTER XIII.

## CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 8. **Beginnings of sorrows.**—*Beginning of travail-pangs*—the throes that are to issue in the regeneration of the world.

Ver. 9. **Render:** *But look ye to yourselves; for they shall deliver you unto sanhedrims and unto synagogues; ye shall be beaten; and at the bar of governors and kings ye shall stand in account of Me, for a testimony to them.* Meaning of last clause: an opportunity will be given you of proclaiming the truth in the hearing of the highest in the land—those who, in the ordinary course of things, would be unlikely to come in contact with peasants of Galilee.

Ver. 11. **Take no thought beforehand.**—*Entertain no solicitude as to what, etc.* **Neither do ye premeditate.**—Omitted in many first-rate MSS. and versions. Probably a marginal explanation of preceding clause, which eventually crept into the text.

Ver. 13. **He that shall endure unto the end.**—"Here is the cardinal virtue of *fortitude*, the cheerful hardihood and loyal sense of duty, evinced by Christ's faithful soldier and servant in meeting all shocks of temptation and all assaults of our enemies; for *ἐμμένειν* often means to bide the brunt of encounter in battle."

Ver. 14. **The abomination of desolation.**—Hebraism for *the abomination that makes desolate*. See Dan. ix. 27, xi. 31, xii. 11. A comparison of this verse with the parallel passage in Matt. xxiv. 15, 16, makes it evident that the scene of this was to be the Temple. Once already had it been desecrated (1 Macc. i. 54), when Antiochus Epiphanes set up the statue of Jupiter on the altar of burnt sacrifice. But a worse profanation was yet to follow. Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*, IV. vi. 3) mentions an ancient saying current among the Jews, that "Jerusalem would be taken, and the Temple be destroyed, when it had been defiled by the hands of Jews themselves"—a prophecy that was literally fulfilled when, during the first siege of Jerusalem under Cestius (A.D. 68), the Temple was taken possession of by a band of Zealots, who committed fearful outrages of lust and murder within its sacred precincts. Such, in the opinion of the writer, was the portent to which Christ pointed as the signal to His followers to lose no time in seeking a place of safety beyond Judea. **Flee to the mountains.**—History records that when the time came the Christians fled from Jerusalem and Judea to Pella, identified with the ruins of Fabil, among the hills of Gilead.

Ver. 17. **Woe to them.**—*Alas! for them . . .* Cp. Luke xxiii. 28, 29; and see Josephus, *Wars*, VI. iii. 4.

Ver. 18. In God's mercy the prayer which the Christians doubtless offered in accordance with this injunction was heard, and the awful calamity of a winter flight averted. The Roman army first encompassed Jerusalem in October, when the weather is still mild; and the final siege took place in April or May.

Ver. 19. Josephus unconsciously echoes these words: "All calamities, from the beginning of time, seem to me to shrink to nothing in comparison with those of the Jews." He gives an awful description of these calamities in *Wars*, VI. iii. 3. See also Tacitus, *History*, v. 13; Milman, *History of the Jews*, ii. 16; Merivale, *History of the Romans*, vi. 59.

Ver. 20. The city which had stood the siege of Nebuchadnezzar for sixteen months (2 Kings xxv. 1-6; Jer. xxxix. 1, 2) was taken by the Romans in less than five. Among the providential circumstances which combined to bring this about may be mentioned—(1) the order of Claudius forbidding Herod Agrippa from completing the fortifications; (2) the wars of factions in Jerusalem itself; (3) the destruction by fire of large stores of provisions; (4) the Jews' abandonment of the towers on the approach of Titus; (5) the swift and energetic measures of the Roman armies.

Ver. 22. **False Christs.**—Not necessarily assuming the name of Christ, but pretending to a fuller revelation than Christ's. Theudas; Simon Magus. **False prophets.**—See Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX. viii. 6; Tacitus, *History*, v. 13. Cp. also 2 Thess. ii. 1-10. **To seduce.**—*With a view to leading astray.* Whether or not successful in this, Christ leaves an open question for the future to decide.

Vers. 28, 29. See R.V. rendering.

Ver. 30. **This generation.**—Always used by Christ of persons then living on earth (Matt. xi. 16, xii. 41, 42, 45, xxiii. 36; Mark viii. 12, 38; Luke vii. 31, xi. 30, 31, 32, 50, 51, xvii. 25). Evidently, then, the *terminus ad quem* of "all these things" is the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ver. 32. **Neither the Son.**—He who as Son of God possesses with the Father and the Holy Spirit the Divine attribute of omniscience, condescended as Son of Man to acquire during His earthly life only such instalments of knowledge (Luke ii. 52) as were consistent with a creaturely form of existence (Phil. ii. 6, 7). The knowledge of the time of the Last Advent

being wholly unnecessary to the Church, was not communicated to Him, its Head. The main thing to remember as to this limitation is that it was *voluntary* on our Lord's part — a *Self-emptying* for the purposes of His Mission to our fallen race.

Ver. 35. **Watch ye.**—*Be ye wakeful.*—A military image. Don't be caught napping at your post. Same word in ver. 37. **At even, etc.**—The Roman divisions of the night. The four watches, of three hours each, began at sunset and ended at sunrise.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—13.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxiv. 1-14; LUKE xxi. 5-19.)

*The destruction of the Temple.*—I. **The function of a prophet.**—Of the three characters, Prophet, Priest, and King, which are united in the person of Christ, the first is that in which He was commonly regarded while He lived among men. The original authority of a prophet is grounded, not on the truth of his declarations concerning future events, which can never be ascertained till the accomplishment of those events, but on the proofs of his Divine mission which he offers to his immediate hearers—the signs and wonders which, in connexion with the purity of his doctrine and the holiness of his life, plainly prove him to be a teacher come from God, a prophet at least, if not more than a prophet. When, however, the miracles have done their work, and convinced the men of that generation of the prophetic character of him who performs them, there still remains the test of prophecy, strictly so called—the predictions, if the prophet have uttered any such, relating to future events, to be accomplished in due season. Many such predictions might be gathered out of our Lord's discourses, and compared with the course of subsequent events, from the time of their delivery unto this day. None, however, will be found more interesting or more convincing than those which He delivered relating to the destruction of that very city and Temple in or near which they were uttered.

II. **The prediction of Christ concerning the Temple.**—Jerusalem might be called, at that time, a prosperous and flourishing city, not indeed independent, but rather strengthened than weakened by that protection which was extended over it by the Roman power. It was surrounded with lofty walls, along which numerous strong towers were erected at certain distances, according to the best methods of fortification then practised. High above all rose the Temple, at once temple and fortress, to the buildings of which belonged those immense stones which were pointed out to Christ by His disciples on this occasion. Could a finer opportunity have been offered of delivering that prediction which He had always intended to leave behind Him of the approaching destruction of both city and Temple? Or could that destruction have been announced in terms better adapted to sink down into the ears of His disciples? When a building, especially one of the size and massive construction of the Temple, is suffered to fall into decay, its destruction is slow and gradual; and long after the more perishable portions have disappeared the walls remain standing, to shew the form and dimensions of the structure when entire. Even when these have fallen down the foundations continue unimpaired; and no degree of dilapidation, nothing but extreme violence and a deliberate intention to destroy, can ever reduce such an edifice to the state here described. It is manifest, therefore, and must have been manifest to Christ's hearers, that He spoke of no ravages of time, no process of decay, but of brute force and hostile assaults, when He used this image.

III. **The fulfilment of this prediction.**—Pass over a period of forty years, and view Jerusalem, as had been foretold of it, compassed with armies, the armies of the Romans under Titus. After several delays, occasioned by the

unsettled state of the Roman Government, Vespasian was at last confirmed in the imperial throne, and his son Titus was sent to command the armies in Judea. The days of Jerusalem were now numbered. Failing to take the city by assault, Titus proceeded to surround the entire compass of it with a wall, thereby fulfilling a part of our Lord's description (Luke xix. 43). The inhabitants being thus without the possibility of escape, and all supplies being cut off, the accomplishment of the rest of the prophecy could not be far off. It was hastened by the conduct of the people themselves. Instead of uniting, as one man, in the defence of the city, they weakened themselves by mutual factions and divisions, insomuch that within the short space of five months the city was taken, and the work of destruction begun. It is recorded that Titus himself was very desirous of preserving the Temple as a monument of Roman power and prowess, but was unable to restrain his own soldiers, who, in the heat and excitement of victory, set fire to it, and resisted all attempts to extinguish the conflagration. The preservation of these great buildings being thus rendered impossible, we read that the Roman general, foiled in his first design, now gave orders to complete the demolition both of the city and Temple by actually digging up and levelling the foundations of them; thus, almost literally, leaving "not one stone upon another."

**Lessons.**—1. How differently would things strike us if we could only look forward a few years! What a world of changes do we live in! Desire and seek after "durable riches," a "building of God," a "good foundation laid up in store against the time to come." 2. In connexion with the punishment inflicted on Jerusalem, reflect on our own responsibility as having succeeded to those privileges of which the Jews were dispossessed. Beware of defiling "the temple of the living God." 3. Where is this temple to be seen in its perfection? Not, will each of us be ready to reply, not in me, nor in my sin-stained, blood-guilty soul. When I look into myself I see a temple indeed, but a temple in ruins; a shrine from which the Divinity has departed; a perverse will, unruly passions, wayward and unsanctified affections; in a word, of that noble fabric which was dedicated to God in baptism, and has been since adorned with so many "gifts of the Holy Ghost," not one stone is left upon another. I see, and mourn; but I do not despair. The tears of the Christian over the breaches and decays of his spiritual temple are the appointed means by which, under God, those breaches are to be healed, and the whole building restored to its original use, and, if possible, to more than its original beauty.—*F. Field, LL.D.*

*Warning, promise, and encouragement.*—There is nothing in these words to encourage speculation, much to induce and strengthen that practical temper and habit, the habit of duty and loyal obedience, in which there lives far more real religion than in all the pious and laborious conjectures good men have framed, and which they sometimes attempt to palm off as infallible certainties on an astonished Church, or world.

**I. The warning** I take to be that we are to wait with patience for the orderly providential unfolding of the Divine counsel, instead of impatiently jumping at hasty and misleading conclusions. The conceited temper which speaks as though it had been admitted to the secret council-chamber of heaven; the curious temper which is for ever prying into futurity, and busies itself with speculation instead of with the rules of holy living and the problems of obedience; the hasty temper which is impatient for results, and wants to see trees bearing fruit as soon as they are planted; and the faithless temper which is always seeking proofs and signs, and confounds seeing with believing, are all rebuked by this grave and kindly warning.

**II. The promise** I take to be that to all faithful and obedient souls, thus



waiting with patience on God amid many tribulations and disappointments, too occupied with duty and service to let their hearts grow sick with hope deferred, a Divine guidance and help will be vouchsafed, answering to every need. Loyalty to Christ under hard conditions, and when we fall on evil times, will expose us to many tribulations—to loss, contumely, and the alienation of friends. But these very tribulations are part of the discipline by which God is making us constant and making us perfect, by which He is preparing us for salvation and life. And meantime, even in our darkest hours and most dejected moods, He is with us to guide and sustain us, to teach us what to say and what to do.

III. The encouragement I take to be that the tribulations of this present time are designed to usher in, to prepare for us and to prepare us for, a better time, a golden age, which shall have no end. This regeneration is our great hope, our great encouragement, under the toils, often unrequited, of time, under all its changes and catastrophes, under the oppressive sense of its manifold evils, sorrows, wrongs. We look for a time, we believe it to be the purpose of God that a time shall come, in which evil will be overcome of good, and death be swallowed up of life, in which not we alone shall be blessed, but all men will be drawn into the service, love, and peace of God. And if we really believe this to be the end to which the love and providence of God are pressing forward through all the vicissitudes and tribulations of time, for the joy set before us, we may well rejoice in our tribulations and toils, even though we do not know when the end will be reached, or what will be the signs of its approach.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *The spiritual temple.*—1. The world admires a stately and magnificent temple; but the temple which attracts the eyes and the heart of Christ, as worthy of God and framed by His Spirit, is a heart which resembles that of this poor widow, a heart consecrated by charity, wherein God makes His abode, and in which this virtue worships Him, sacrifices itself to Him, mourns continually in His presence, and there feeds upon His Divine Word. 2. Christ bears with the simplicity of His disciples, who would have Him admire a temple of which He was Himself the model, and which was only a figure of His body; but He makes use of this simplicity to instruct them, to take off their minds from this visible temple, and to give them a foresight of that justice which He was to exercise upon this building, on account of the Jews. Nothing of that which is to be destroyed is worthy to be the true temple of God. It is in a poor and humble heart that He delights to dwell.—*P. Quesnel.*

Vers. 5-13. *This prophecy a proof of Christ's Divinity.*—This prophecy is one of the clearest and surest in the Bible, and has ever been regarded by Christians as a decisive proof of the Divine mission of their Lord. In a time of peace He predicted war. When there were only visible signs of prosperity, He foretold speedy destruction. When the disciples were few, He declared that the gospel would soon be proclaimed to distant nations. When the apostles were about to forsake Him, seeking safety by flight, He said that ere long many would be willing to die for His name. When there were no outward indications of success, He spoke with perfect confidence of the establishment of His kingdom. He taught the disciples that its nature was different from their hopes, being more excellent; and the means of its promotion different from their expectations, being more effective. Knowing that after two days He should be crucified, and declaring this to the disciples, He expressed to them

the full assurance of the triumph of His kingdom, by means of which the history of the world afforded no example; and of their salvation, through sufferings which they feared to anticipate. He gave them that knowledge, and only that, which was useful to them; and referred to their coming trials with the firmest faith and the most tender sympathy. He announced the retribution which would come on His adversaries, without any personal resentment, stating it to be the righteous judgment of God, but manifesting compassion even for those whose sins brought upon themselves destruction. Such were the words of Jesus; and His words were fulfilled. Looking only to this one prophecy, we say with those who witnessed the Crucifixion, "Truly this is the Son of God."—*J. H. Godwin.*

Vers. 5, 6. *The danger of being led astray.*—It is quite as important not to be led astray by false religious teachers as by any other class of deceivers or deceived; and there is quite as much danger in this line as in any other. Sincerity on our part is no guard against deception or wandering; nor is sincerity a safeguard to a religious teacher. Those who are themselves both honest and sincere would lead us astray if we followed them in their wrong path. There is danger of our being led astray by the sermons we hear, the papers or the books we read, the counsel or example of those whom we have supposed to be godly, or by the impulses or convictions of our own minds and hearts. There is such a thing as conscientious error-teaching and devil-serving. The warning of Jesus is, that ye take heed that no man lead you astray in doctrine or morals, through holding up a false standard of conduct, or a false interpretation of God's Word.

Ver. 6. "*I am Christ.*"—Imposture will always take its clue from antecedent reality; its work is that of

distortion, not of invention (Acts xix. 13; 2 Tim. ii. 18; 2 Pet. iii. 16).—*J. Miller.*

Ver. 11. *Divine source of apostolic sufficiency.*—Christ chose poor fishermen to shew that however insufficient soever He received them, yet He received them into such a school, such an university, as would deliver them back into His Church, made fit by Him for the service thereof. Christ needed not man's sufficiency; He took insufficient men. Christ excuses no man's insufficiency; He made them sufficient (Mark xvi. 20; Acts iv. 13; Exod. iv. 10-12; 2 Cor. iv. 7).—*John Donne, D.D.*

Ver. 12. *Christianity the cause of division.*—As Christianity gives birth to and cherishes the most perfect love, so it calls forth the most bitter hatred. It calls forth a love which is above nature, because it makes men love their enemies. Contrariwise it calls forth a hatred which is unnatural; for it made, and yet makes, men hate and betray, and, if they can, destroy their own flesh and blood. Thus we read that the Emperor Domitian, in his hatred of the Christian name, slew Flavius Clemens and his niece, or near relation Flavia Domitilla; the Emperor Maximin martyred Artemia, his own sister; and Diocletian slew his own wife and other relatives. St. Barbara also was killed by her own father; and if we had a full martyrology of obscure Christians, we should find multitudes of others similarly betrayed by their own flesh and blood. We are told by Indian missionaries that as soon as converts are baptised they become objects of hatred to their nearest relatives; even their wives often desert them. Now if this be so in a country where Christianity is the religion of the rulers, what would it be if heathenism were unchecked in its power of persecution?—*M. F. Sadler.*

Ver. 13. *Incentives to perseverance.*—  
1. Of all afflictions and troubles, those

are the most comfortable to suffer and endure which are suffered for Christ. 2. By these kinds of sufferings we glorify God, and bring honour to the name of Christ, and credit to the gospel, more than by any other sufferings. 3. It is a most honourable thing unto us, yea, the greatest glory that may be in this world, to suffer anything for Christ. 4. Consider how much Christ has suffered for us, and for our salvation; how great reproach and shame; what bitter pain and torment of soul and body; and let this move us patiently and willingly to suffer any persecution and trouble for His sake. 5. Consider how much wicked men suffer in the practice of sin, and to satisfy their wicked lusts, and let this move us to suffer any persecution for Christ. 6. Consider the great and excellent reward promised to those who endure for Christ's sake.—*G. Petter.*

*Persecution a trial to perseverance.*—There are persecutions *and* persecutions—great and bloody persecutions such as a Nero or a Decius could inaugurate on an imposing scale; and, as we know, petty persecutions, which are all that is permitted to the native ferocity of the persecuting temper by

the milder manners of a more civilised age. But persecution, whatever its scale, is a trial to perseverance. Persecution is in any case friction; and, as we all know, friction, if only it be continued long enough, brings movement to a standstill, unless there be a new supply of the impelling force. Men who have done much for Christ have given up at the last under the stress of relentless persecution. And perhaps petty persecutions are more trying to perseverance, in some ways, than great ones. Men who have not flinched from the axe or from the stake will yield to the incessant worry of domestic or local tyranny—to the persecutions which make home wretched, or the office, or the shop, or the dormitory wellnigh intolerable. Why do we pray in the Church service that “the evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us be brought to naught, and, by the providence of God’s goodness, may be dispersed?” It is that we, His servants, “being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto Him in His holy Church.” In other words, it is because persecution involves a serious risk to perseverance.—*Canon Liddon.*

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—32.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxiv. 15-36; LUKE xxi. 20-33.)

*Christ’s manifestation in glory.*—The manifestations of Christ are not exhausted yet. The Infant, the Child, the Man, the Worker of miracles, the Teacher by parables—He has been revealed to us as all these; but there is still another revelation of Him to come in the unknown future. He came once to visit us in great humility; He shall come again to judge us in glorious majesty.

1. **There will be a manifestation of Christ in truth and unmistakable reality.**—Till the moment of His coming it will be possible to deceive. False prophets were the bane of the old dispensation; false Christs are the bane of the new. We scarcely wonder that false Messiahs could command followers at a time like the siege of Jerusalem. It was just the crisis from which they would expect a Messiah to deliver them. But we *do* wonder, and we ought to wonder, that false Christs have arisen since, and that they arise still. That men who do not believe that Christ has come yet should be prepared to accept a self-styled Christ, if only his credentials satisfy them, is at least consistent, if not almost excusable; but for men who believe that Christ has already come, and then discredit His perfect life and Divine teaching by seeking elsewhere for light and



guidance—for these we have no excuse, no explanation. Whatever may be said of the *results* of Christian effort in these days, there can be no question as to its *tendencies*. Give it full power and fair play, and it would reform the world. This is as much as to say that, so far forth as Christianity succeeds in exhibiting Christ, so far she is a trusted leader of society. Where she has failed to help the world, she has failed to represent Christ. Our contention is, and must be, this: that Christianity leads to Christ, and Christ to God; that the knowledge of God is the highest of all knowledge; that all which leads away from Him must end in nothingness, and can but be a loss to those who gain it. There is an inherent “deceivableness of unrighteousness”—an essential capacity for “strong delusion”—as to the highest of all truths which we are led by the Holy Spirit always to expect, and increasingly till the end of time, possibly that the contrast at the end might be the more marked. While they are all at their very busiest, and the “very elect” themselves almost dizzy with the whirl in the religious air, He will stand before them, true and unmistakable. “Every eye shall see Him” then; the mists from men’s minds and the cobwebs of men’s waving will be swept away, and at that moment they shall know, even as they, are known. “I am the Truth” will be condemnation enough for millions in that day, if no other sentence were to proceed out of His mouth.

**II. Christ will be manifested in universality.**—At present it is here and there, as men carry the message. Dark corners have to wait till they can be attended to. “Go ye into all the world and preach” is the world’s only chance: for “how shall they hear without a preacher?” Nor is this all. It was not enough to light the lamp of the Tabernacle with heavenly flame; it required daily tending and replenishing with oil. We overcome the darkness of night with artificial light; and we keep up the gospel light in men’s hearts by human means. If Christ is our Sun of Righteousness, it is only to be expected that He should seem sometimes to set. The Church is His own devised system for arresting His beams and deriving His rays to ourselves. But the coming of the Son of Man shall be no longer, as it is now, like the coming and the going of the sun in the heavens—a sun, too, whose light can be admitted or excluded at will. It shall be rather like the lightning-flash, of which you say, “It is lightening in the east,” and yet, at the selfsame moment, it is in the west too—the lightning which seems to follow no law, but penetrates everywhere—awfully beautiful, irresistibly destructive, fearfully silent, and which has done its work, its irreparable work, before the roar of the thunder is heard. The highest attract it first, and yet it may pass the highest and strike the lowest. All that we can say for certain is, that whatsoever withstands it in its course will utterly be destroyed. Lightning always appals, though it leaves us unscathed. Its downward dart suggests a doomed mark, and its rapid zigzag forbids us to guess its aim; all are in peril where any one may be struck. It may well be that the *suspense* at the coming of the Son of Man will be the first instalment of the torments of the lost.

**III. The awful majesty in which He will appear.**—This is set forth in the appalling changes that will come over the material heavens. The sun darkened, so that the moon can no longer shine with his reflected light—an image, surely, of the helplessness of the blinded followers of blind leaders. The stars falling from heaven, as not presuming to govern *this* night of no mere physical darkness, and in a dismay corresponding to the joy with which they sang together when the corner-stone of the earth was laid. The powers of heaven shaking, as in anticipation of their “passing away with a great noise.” And then the appearance of the sign of the Son of Man. What that sign shall be—whether, as Christian history leads us to suppose, the sign of the Fiery Cross, or whether rather a new sign, corresponding to the new heavens and the new

earth—we cannot tell. Christian poetry may weave thoughts into scarcely understood words, so that for a time we think that we picture it; meditation may help us to forget ourselves, till we say, “I feel it, but I cannot put it into words”: we can approach it in similes and illustrations; but when all is done, we shall but have listened, felt, thought as *men*; and as men we still must confess at last, “We cannot bear it now.”

IV. Christ will be manifested then as in search of His own. It were idle to ask, “Who would not be of the elect then?” It is more to the purpose to inquire, “What do men mean by being ashamed of Christ now?” It is to shew no faith, no love, no trust; it is to put man before God, to put worldly men before the saints; it is to give the lie to all our religious phrases, and falsify all our Christian hopes; it is to tempt God to take us at our word and say, “According to your faith, so be it done unto you.”—*E. T. Marshall.*

Ver. 32. *The limitations of our Lord's manhood.*—It has generally been considered very difficult to reconcile the passage before us with the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. The common explanation, which refers our Saviour's ignorance of the date of the approaching judgment to His human nature only, is indignantly denounced as a miserable subterfuge by those who deny His Divinity. And even some of the ablest among the orthodox have abandoned this interpretation as unsatisfactory, if not evasive. To us, however, it seems perfectly just and Scriptural; while its supposed difficulties admit, we think, of solutions which are not only sound in logic, but are commonly applied in the interpretation of many other passages. We shall endeavour to support this opinion in the following argument.

I. Jesus Christ, while truly God, was also truly man, and therefore possessed a human soul.—Innumerable acts and feelings are attributed to Christ in the Scriptures, which, on the one hand, are incompatible with the nature of God, and, on the other, could not be asserted of any mere physical organisation. “He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” “He groaned in spirit and was troubled” at the grave of Lazarus. “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” “In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren.” He prayed unto the Father “with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that He feared.” “*He increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and man.*”

II. The union of the Divine and human natures in the person of our Lord did not extinguish or confound the essential attributes of either. We can easily understand that two different natures, distinguished by the most opposite qualities, may yet be so connected as to constitute one person. We experience the truth of this in our own mysterious conformation. But this implies no confusion of their separate peculiarities. Because the body and the soul, in their present inexplicable conjunction, make up the individual man, does it follow that matter thinks, or that mind is extended in three dimensions? And if not, why should we imagine that the finite and the Infinite lost their respective differences and were merged into a common medium in the person of Immanuel, God with us? The widest possible diversity subsists between these two classes of attributes. And if we are justified in pronouncing the properties of the circle and the square to be intrinsically incompatible, we may surely maintain that the union of Deity and manhood in the person of the Lord left the essence of each undestroyed, unabsorbed, entire, and perfect in all its qualities.

III. Omniscience is one of the incommunicable attributes of God, in which, therefore, the reasonable soul of Christ had no participation. Of God, and of God alone, can it be said that “His understanding is infinite.” When, therefore, omniscience is ascribed to the Redeemer, it must be understood of His

Divine, not of His human nature. We may, indeed, with good reason believe that the rational soul of Christ received successive and great additions of knowledge from its connexion with the Eternal Word; but these, whatever their amount, did not exalt the creature into an equality with God. We have already quoted the scripture which declares that Christ "increased in wisdom." Now that which is susceptible of increase is clearly at an infinite distance from infinity. If, then, the knowledge of the man Christ Jesus, however extended, was still the knowledge of a creature, and therefore finite, what inconsistency is there in believing that there were secrets in the counsels of God concealed even from Him?

IV. Though the union of the Divine and human natures in the Saviour involved no permutation or absorption of their respective peculiarities, it constituted Him one person, of whom, therefore, the attributes of God and man might be predicated indifferently. —The inspired writers affirm many things of Christ which are true only of His Divine nature—many which, in strictness of speech, apply only to His humanity. Yet they seldom mark the distinction. They did not think it necessary to say that "by Him," *in His Divine nature*, "were all things created"—"by Him and for Him," *that is, as He was God*; "and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist," *considering Him as Divine*. They did not say that, *as God*, "He is Lord of all"—that, *as one with the Father*, He is "the First and the Last—that "Thou, Lord, in the beginning," *by Thine eternal power and Godhead*, "hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thine hands." Nor did they usually adopt any such guarded phraseology in speaking of Jesus as man. We do not read that, *in His human nature*, "He was an hungered"—that, *as man*, "being wearied with His journey, He sat thus on the well"—that, *as partaker of flesh and blood*, "He was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow"—that, *in His character as a creature*, He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Sometimes, it is true, we meet with qualifying expressions in reference to His humanity—such as, "according to the flesh," "the offering of the body of Jesus," etc. But these instances are comparatively few, and easily accounted for by the context; while, in the current phraseology of the Scriptures, both Divine and human attributes are given to Christ without any express limitation of either to the one nature or to the other. Is it any harder to believe that the human soul of Jesus was left in ignorance of future times and seasons, than to believe that it sorrowed, complained, and prayed?

V. It may be asked, "But is not such a method of interpretation somewhat unnatural? Is it not assumed without proof?"—We think that in answering these questions we can produce a form of expression exactly parallel to that against which the objection is raised, yet employed in general conversation without ever incurring the charge of impropriety or any danger of misconstruction. No one will deny that, in the opinion of an immense majority, the body and the soul of man are two different natures, distinguished by opposite and incompatible qualities. It is equally clear, as we have already observed, that this conjunction involves no loss and no confusion of their characteristic peculiarities. There is a mutual influence of the two natures, we readily admit. The feelings and volitions of the mind act on the nerves of the body; and certain affections of the nerves produce sensations in the mind. But matter is still matter, mind is mind; and this reciprocal activity of both occasions no interchange or assimilation of their several powers. And yet we familiarly employ, with reference to man in general, language which is strictly true only of one part of his nature. We do this continually in common discourse, and in written style, without formally announcing the distinction; and we do it without any risk of misinterpretation. We say of any individual with whom



we are acquainted that he is tall or short, light or heavy, brown or fair. Yet we never think of adding a prudent parenthesis to inform the company that we are speaking only of the body of the individual in question. On the other hand, we describe the same individual, it may be, as imaginative, choleric, or timid—as fond of reasoning, or deficient in memory, or conscientious even to scrupulosity. Yet we do not deem it necessary to restrict the application of these phrases to the spiritual nature of the man. The two classes of attributes are too distinct to be confounded. And were not the Divine and human natures of our Lord as perfectly distinct in all their powers? Are the qualities of the creature and the perfections of God so much alike as to be distinguished with difficulty, and perpetually liable to be confounded? Assuredly if error of this kind be rendered anywhere impossible, from the nature of the case, it is so in the incarnation of “the Mighty God.” It has been observed by an eminent writer that “the pet texts of a Socinian are quite enough for his confutation with acute thinkers. If Christ had been a mere man, it would have been ridiculous *in Him* to call Himself the Son of Man; but being God and man, it then became, in His own assumption of it, a peculiar and mysterious title.” The same remark may be applied, we think, to the passage now under consideration. Let the name of any of the prophets or apostles be substituted for the designation of Christ, and a sentence is produced at which even a Socinian might stagger. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither Moses*, but the Father.” It matters little what particular name is selected for the experiment. Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, or John, in such a collocation, would be alike incongruous with the whole phraseology and spirit of the Bible. Why, then, would such an announcement have revolted us, while the name of the Son, in this identical connexion, awakens no surprise? Manifestly because the human soul of Christ, from its conjunction with “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person,” was admitted to a knowledge of the counsel of God which is never ascribed to any other creature; manifestly because “in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” The audacity of those who deny the possibility of such a union has been too often rivalled by the presumption of others who have pretended to explain it. On such a subject our only wisdom is to receive, with the faith of “little children,” the words “which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” not “adding to them, lest we be reproved.”—*J. M. Mackenzie.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 14-18. *A fruitful warning.*—As they were not to linger in the guilty city, so we are to let no earthly interests arrest our flight—not to turn back, but promptly and resolutely to flee unto the everlasting hills. As they should pray that their flight through the mountains should not be in the winter, so should we beware of needing to seek salvation in the winter of the soul, when the storms of passion and appetite are wildest, when evil habits have made the road slippery underfoot, and sophistry and self-will have hidden the gulfs in a treacherous wreath of snow.—*Dean Chadwick.*

Ver. 18. *Winter flight.*—How late is it to begin our flight from the world and sin in the winter of old age and death! In the winter the days are short, the ways bad, the season rainy, the night comes on before we are aware, and we meet with a thousand impediments and hindrances of flight and travelling: these are a lively representation of those hindrances of salvation which men find at the end of their lives. The grace to prevent them by a speedy conversion is obtained only by prayer.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 22. *False Christs.*—There have

been many of them. David George, for instance, who ultimately settled at Basle, where he died in 1556. He claimed, according to the account of Dr. Henry More, to be the true Christ, the dear Son of God, born not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. He was to restore the house of Israel, and re-erect the tabernacle of God, not by afflictions and death, as the other Messiah, but by that sweetness, love, and grace that were given him of the Father. He had the power of the remission of sins, and had come to administer the last judgment. He averred that "the Holy Scriptures, the sayings and testimonies of the prophets, of Christ, and of His apostles, do all point, if rightly understood, in their true mystery, to the glorious coming of David George, who is greater than the former Christ, as being born of the Spirit, and not of the flesh" (*Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, § 34). This David George, says Dr. More, was a man "of notable natural parts, of comely person, and a graceful presence." And he had many adherents, who believed in him. In our own day there are persons—out of asylums—who put forth corresponding claims. There is lying before the writer a *Tract on the Second Advent fulfilled*, in which it is said that "the enrolling of the saints commenced on the anniversary of the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles of the year 1868, that is, on the 9th of October, 1868. The following," it is added, "is the declaration to be made and signed: 'I believe Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah at His first coming and the antitypical Paschal Lamb who died for sin in allegory, and I believe John Cochran of Glasgow to be that Messiah at His second coming and the antitypical High Priest who has taken away sin in reality.'" Of all such persons it has, in consequence of their obscurity, to be said, "Lo, here! Lo, there!" "Believe not," says our Saviour.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

*False prophets.*—They have been lying in number. Lodowick Muggle-

ton, for instance, who, on the title-page of his *True Interpretation of the whole Book of the Revelation of St. John* (1746), describes himself as "one of the two last commissioned witnesses and prophets of the only high, immortal, glorious God, Christ Jesus." Madame Antoinette Bourignon, before him, was a far nobler being, yet she declared to Christian de Cort: "I am sent from God to bring light to the world, and to bear witness to the truth. He has sent me to tell that the last times are come; that the world is judged, and the sentence is irrevocable; that the plagues are begun, and will not cease till all evil be rooted out; and that Jesus Christ will come shortly to the earth to finish this, and then He will continue to reign with 'men of goodwill,' who shall enjoy eternal peace. I am sent with a commission to declare all these things to men, to the end that peradventure some of them may be converted and repent, that they may reign with Jesus Christ in His glory."—*Ibid.*

*False Christs and false prophets.*—In those days it was an adventurer who traded on the religious enthusiasm of his compatriots—led them out to some desert or to some mountain-side to enjoy for a moment the delirium of an impossible delusion, and then, perhaps, to suffer the punishment of a supposed political offence. In our days it is a sceptical friend, it is an article in a review, it is the general atmosphere of the social circle in which we live. Our faith is undermined by people who talk and write in the very best English, and who have so much about them that is winning and agreeable that we cannot believe what is really going on. Still, after a time, we find that we have less hold on the Unseen than we had, that prayer is more difficult, that conscience is more sluggish, that religious exertion of all kinds is more unwelcome; and this, I say, means that the soul's hold of the central realities is, to say the very least, weakened, if that is, indeed, anything like a full and true account of what

has taken place. We cannot go on breathing a bad air, and be as we were when we lived high up upon the mountain, unless we take very great precautions. Not to take them under such circumstances as these is to be in the fair way to forfeit perseverance.—*Canon Liddon.*

Vers. 25-27. *The Second Advent.*—The second coming of Christ will be even as the first coming at His incarnation—an historical fact taking place on the world in which we live; not anything like a figure of speech, but breaking violently into the uniform and hitherto unbroken continuity of time and nature, and thus freeing the soul and spirit of man from those physical relations on which man is now dependent, and giving the soul fresh opportunities and hopes in a world where all will be glorious. Such will be the second coming of Christ—the perfecting of the first. Not partial, however, and gradual as His first coming, when Christ was revealed here to one and there to one; but seen and recognised by all the tribes of the earth. Not gradual, for it has taken long to spread the Church, and the work is very far from being done even now; but sudden and instantaneous—revealed as a flash of lightning. By one act and one appearance will He unite the greatest terror with the greatest glory; He will transform the world and nature and time; He will judge the living and the dead, and carry the children of God to the inheritance of eternal life.—*Jas. Lonsdale.*

Ver. 30. *Two horizons.*—In that landscape of the future, of which our Lord permitted His disciples to catch a glimpse in this great discourse of “the last things,” there were two horizons—one near at hand, the other afar off. “The boundary line of either horizon marked the winding up of an æon; each was a great ending; of each it was true that the then existing generation, first in its literal sense, then in its wider sense

of ‘race,’ should not pass away until all had been fulfilled.” One event was the end of the Jewish nationality, the other the end of the world. The former was in many respects the type of the latter. The signs, both in the natural and moral world, which preceded and accompanied the overthrow of Jerusalem are measurably the same as those which will characterise the last ages of the world. And hence it is not easy to determine with precision what signs are applicable solely to one event, and what are applicable solely to the other. In true prophetic style they are much intermingled. But we must not forget that they are the words of “One whose whole being moved in the sphere of eternity and not of time”; that moral warning rather than chronological indication is the real object of prophecy; and that “to the voice of prophecy, as to the eye of God, all time is but one eternal present.”

Ver. 31. *The perishable and the imperishable.*—I. **The things which shall pass away.**—the perishable things, the destructible things, the things which in this visible economy seem never to continue in one stay, and at last shall perish for ever. 1. Thus see what traces of instability and decay are written on the things men chiefly love and live for. Riches, honours, comforts, friends—youth, beauty, genius, strength—the prospering enterprise, the unfolding hope, the fellowship of kindred minds, and the hallowed domestic ties,—how slight is our hold on the fairest and best of these things! 2. See the same truth inscribed on what we might have thought would have a more enduring life; namely, the triumphs of man’s intellectual nature—the inventions of art, the applications of science, the treasures of literature, the profound researches of the learned, and the ingenious discoveries of the wise: all these are found to be of the earth, earthy. 3. Again, how strikingly are we reminded of this law of mutability and decay, as applied



to all earthly things, when we contemplate the history of nations. 4. But not to indications, in the history and moral circumstances of mankind only, are we to limit the application of our Lord's words. As the foregoing verses shew, the final consummation will be preceded by a mighty disturbance among the elemental powers of nature. Who shall say how soon all visible and material things, consumed and scattered, as it were by the springing of some invisible mine, may be called upon to shed the light of their dissolving glory on the day of Christ, and testify to the imperishableness of His words?

**II. Christ's words shall not pass away.**—1. Because they are founded on eternal truth, and on the fixed purposes of the unchangeable Jehovah. 2. Because of the eternal power and Godhead of Him who spake them. 3. Because of their connexion with His own glory as the Divinely constituted Mediator.—*D. Moore.*

*The permanence of Christ's words.*—

**I. The words which Jesus spake while on earth are permanently associated with our whole life.**

**II. All our literature is enriched by these words.**

**III. That which is spiritual must always be more permanent than the material.**

**IV. Yet the material prepares the**

**way for the spiritual application.**—

1. A lesson of warning, since we are in danger of attaching too much importance to the form, and too little to the truth, which the form embodies. 2. A lesson of encouragement; opinions may change and interpretations differ, but the truth remains always the same.—*F. Wagstaff.*

*Ver. 32. Christ's voluntary limitation of knowledge.*—What forbids us to believe that His knowledge, like His power, was limited by a lowliness not enforced, but for our sakes chosen; and that as He could have asked for twelve legions of angels, yet chose to be bound and buffeted, so He could have known that day and hour, yet submitted to ignorance, that He might be made like in all points to His brethren? Souls there are for whom this wonderful saying, "The Son knoweth not," is even more affecting than the words, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."—*Dean Chadwick.*

To me this means that He who was to judge the world, who knew what was in man, and more, who alone knew the Father, was at that time content to have that hour hidden from Him—did not choose to be above the angels in knowing it—as He was afterwards content to be forsaken of the Father.—*Dean Church.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 33—37.

*The command to watch.*—In this brief parable the Church is compared to a great mansion, with many offices, duties, servants—a vast, complex, interior ministry, every function of which must be diligently discharged if the house is to be kept in order and the household are to live in comfort and peace.

**I. The authority which the departing Master confers on all His servants.**—We know that in a household where the father and master is served from love and not from fear, when he goes away for a time, the children and servants, if they are faithful, bestir themselves to shew that they are not unworthy of the trust he reposes in them. A pulse of quickened affection and activity spreads from heart to heart. A new and invigorating sense of responsibility stimulates them to a more steadfast and earnest discharge of duty. If our ruling motive and inspiration be love to Christ, we shall not dream of saying of any work which needs to be done, "This is no business of mine," or "I am not bound to do that"; we shall be eager to do whatever we can for the general good. No task will be too mean for us, no detail too petty or trivial.

II. Besides this general authority, common to all, we have each of us a special task to do for Him and for the family named after Him. "To each one his own work," *i.e.* the work he is specially fitted or called to do. And, indeed, the forms of service are so many, and the call for service so imperative, that no one need lack suitable employment if only he is bent on finding it. None is so weak or so poor in endowment but that he may do a little good, if only he be of a willing mind. In the Household of Faith, as in the world, there are many forms of service, many ways of gaining spiritual food and strength and skill; and there are many servants in it who do not feel that their gifts fit them for one kind of labour more than for another; some doubt whether they have any gifts, any calling, worthy of the name. But if necessity is laid upon them, what will they do? Naturally they will try this kind of work and that, till they find a work which they can do, and perhaps a work they can like as well as do; or they will take up the work that comes first to hand, and gradually make themselves fit for it by doing it. What we chiefly want, if at least we are doing little or nothing for Him, is more love, and of that kind of love which will make us feel that we must do something for Him who has done so much for us. As we get more love we shall do more work, and settle down into our proper vocation.

III. To work we must add watchfulness.—The porter is to look for his lord's return; but so are all the servants: *i.e.* they are to expect it, to be ready for it, to desire it. We are not to be as drudges who have no pleasure in their work, nor as hirelings who care only for their wages. Our labour is to be bright with hope, with the hope of a great happiness to come, and that may come at any moment. The Lord is always coming to those who look for His appearing. We see His advent on a large scale in every crisis of the great human story. In revolution, in reformations, when the thoughts of men's hearts are revealed, when they are summoned to accept new forms of truth or to enter on new spheres of duty, we know that Christ has come once more to try their works, to see whether they have been faithful to Him and are ready to greet Him with love and joy. And in like manner, though not so obviously, He comes to us in the crises of our individual history, when one page of our life is closed and a new page is opened. For each one of us there is an advent of Christ as often as new and larger views of truth are presented to us, or we are called to leave a familiar round of duty and to take up new duties and more laborious. If we are so absorbed in the mere routine of our previous service, or so attached to old forms of truth and labour, that we have no eye for new aspects of truth, and no ear for the call to new labours, we miss another happy chance; we are like servants who, stolidly plodding through a familiar drudgery, do not hear when the Master stands at the door and knocks, and are even flurried and vexed should He bid them do what they have never done before. But if, while going resolutely and happily about our accustomed tasks, we look alertly and anxiously for the joy of Christ's return; if, because we know so little, we expect Him to teach us new truths; if, because our service is so imperfect, we expect to be called to new and better modes of serving Him, we are like servants who, living daily in hope of the Master's return, catch the first signal of His approach, hurry out to welcome Him, and are rewarded for their watchful diligence by having greater authority committed to them, and ministries which bring them nearer to His person. And all these advents of Christ, in new truths and new duties, are but preludes of that great personal advent for which we look none the less earnestly because we know neither its day nor its hour. We know that He who once came and dwelt among us in great humility will come again, in the glory of the Father, to complete the work He then began—to finish our redemption, to reward every act of kindness

as though it had been done to Him. And therefore we are watchful, and strengthen the things which are ready to die, not suffering any grace to perish out of our hearts in this world's unkindly weather, but guarding and cherishing it for the summer of eternity; nor permitting any good enterprise to fail for lack of help, but breathing into it the life of our help till happier times arrive.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 33-36. *The duty of watchfulness enforced.*—I. **The duty inculcated.**

—Watchfulness and prayer are often united in the Holy Scriptures as duties of the first importance. In themselves they are different; but in their exercise they are inseparable: neither would be of any avail without the other: prayer without watchfulness would be hypocritical; and watchfulness without prayer presumptuous. 1. What we should watch and pray against. Here we must include everything which has a tendency to lull us asleep. We see how intent men are on all the things of time and sense: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life so occupy them that they find no time nor inclination for spiritual concerns. 2. What we should watch and pray for. To be found ready, at whatever moment our Lord shall call for us, should be the one object of our ambition.

II. **The considerations with which it is enforced.**—1. The uncertainty of the time when our Lord shall call us. There is not a moment of our lives when we may sit down secure. 2. The awfulness of being found in a sleeping state. It will be to no purpose to plead that we were not engaged in any wicked projects. We were "slothful servants," and therefore are justly regarded as "wicked."

III. **Our Lord's concluding admonition,** "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch," will lead us to address some different descriptions of persons. 1. The old. Is so much of your time gone, and will you not improve the remainder? 2. The young. What security have you against death, that you should delay so necessary a work? 3. The afflicted. God sends

your afflictions on purpose to awaken you from your slumbers, and to stir you up to heavenly pursuits. What an aggravation will it be of your guilt if these dispensations pass away unimproved! 4. The backslidden. What an awful thing is it that, instead of having advanced in the Divine life, you have lost in a good measure the life which you once had! Attend to God's admonition to the Church of Sardis, lest He execute upon you the judgment that He threatened to inflict on them (Rev. iii. 2, 3). 5. The more steadfast Christian. Experience proves that the exhortation to "watch" is not less necessary for you than for others. How many who are on the whole pious grieve, by their unwatchfulness, their Divine Master.—*C. Simeon.*

Ver. 33. *Watch and pray.*—Two duties. 1. The activity of the eye earthward. 2. The emotion of the heart Godward. Watchfulness is like the hands of the clock that point; prayer is the weight that keeps the machinery in motion.—*T. J. Judkin.*

Ver. 34. *Fidelity and watchfulness.*—The whole which our Blessed Master, when He ascended into heaven, recommended to the care of His servants, consisted in fidelity and watchfulness: fidelity, in doing everything well which is to be done in His house, in the heart, in the Church, according to the full extent of their duty; watchfulness, in suffering no stranger nor enemy to enter by the senses, which are the gates of the soul, in permitting nothing which belongs to the Master to go out without His orders, and in carefully observing all commerce and correspondence which the heart may have abroad in the



world, to the prejudice of the Master's service.—*P. Quesnel.*

*Every man the porter of his own heart.*—It is the business of each one of us to stop, by God's help, evil thoughts from coming in and good aspirations from going out. We must watch and pray that we enter not into temptation.

Ver. 36. *Remissness and negligence*, as well as the greater sins, are often the occasion of our being surprised by death. A porter asleep exposes the house to be robbed, and well deserves to be punished. A Christian whose faith is not watchful exposes his own heart to the enemy of his salvation, and to those who are continually watching, in order to steal away all the valuable things which God has laid up there, as in His own house.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 37. *Reasons for watchfulness.*—  
1. Because you are liable to drowsiness and slumber. 2. Because means are constantly being used to seduce you from the ways of saving peace. 3. Because you have given yourselves up as soldiers of the Cross. 4. Because you have many duties to perform. 5. Because you know not when the Master will come to demand an account.

*Watch.*—1. To prevent evil. 2. To further good.

*Watching for Christ.*—He watches for Christ who has a sensitive, eager, apprehensive mind; who is awake, alive, quick-sighted, zealous in seeking and honouring Him; who looks out for Him in all that happens; and who would not be surprised, who would not be overagitated or overwhelmed, if he found that He was coming at once.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIII.

Vers. 7, 8. *The sorrows of war.*—The conqueror of Bonaparte at Waterloo wrote, on the day after June 19th, to the Duke of Beaufort: "The losses we have sustained have quite broken me down, and I have no feeling for the advantages we have acquired." On the same day, too, he wrote to Lord Aberdeen: "I cannot express to you the regret and sorrow with which I look round me and contemplate the loss which I have sustained, particularly in your brother. The glory resulting from such actions, so dearly bought, is no consolation to me, and I cannot suggest it as any to you and his friends; but I hope that it may be expected that this last one has been so decisive as that no doubt remains that our exertions and our individual losses will be rewarded by the early attainment of our just object. It is then that the glory of the actions in which our friends and relations have fallen will be some consolation for their loss." He who could write thus had already attained a greater victory than that of Waterloo; and the less naturally follows the greater.

Ver. 13. *Endurance.*—There was a period during the battle of Königgrätz when the attack of the Prussians seemed hopeless. Across the stream and up the long slope the battalions poured, only to be again and again repulsed by the Austrian army, and yet again and again they returned to the

attack. And what was the secret that encouraged their persistence? An observer of the battle from a tall tower, at this crisis, looked eastward along the range of elevated ground which was the stronghold of the Austrians, and in the distance, from the edge of a wood, his eye caught the gleaming of bayonets. A strong body of Prussians had outflanked the Austrians, and was advancing rapidly on the rear of their position, and it was the knowledge of this flank movement of the other division of their army that gave courage and endurance to those Prussians who attacked in front. Just thus the Christian, though often disappointed with his failures in the spiritual life, yet persists in his efforts, for he knows that the irresistible force of God's power will come to the help of His tried and tempted servants.

*Constancy.*—Some dyes cannot bear the weather, but alter colour presently; but there are others that, having something that gives a deeper tincture, will hold. The graces of a true Christian hold out in all sorts of weather, in winter and summer, prosperity and adversity, when superficial counterfeit holiness will give out.—*R. Sibbes.*

*Persistence.*—"I know the way to heaven," said little Minnie to little Johnny, who stood by her side, looking at a picture-book. "You do?" said little John. "Well, won't you tell me how to get there?" "Oh yes! I'll tell you. Just commence going

up, and keep on going all the time, and you'll get there. But, Johnny, you must not turn back."

Vers. 15, 16. *The danger of delay.*—1. Opportunity is like a string of stepping-stones across a ford. The traveller, coming up to them, may find the river so swollen with the rains that the stones are all but covered. If he delay, though his home be on the opposite bank, and full in sight, it may be too late to cross, and he may have a journey of several miles to reach his home. 2. Opportunity is like a narrow passage in the Arctic Seas. Sometimes, in these northern regions, ships get enclosed in a narrow space between ice-islands. The floating rocks glide nearer the ship on every side, and the dismayed seamen behold their only chance of escape from the fatal crash lies in a narrow channel, that every moment grows still narrower. How hurriedly they press their vessel through that strip to reach the safety of the open ocean! Even so must we press along the narrow way that leads to eternal life; for who knows how soon that narrow way may be closed against him.

Ver. 18. *The horrors of a winter flight.*—In the autumn of 1812 Napoleon entered Moscow with 120,000 soldiers, intending to pass the winter there in comfort. On October 13th (three weeks earlier than it had ever been known before) snow began to fall. The proud emperor looked out of his window in dismay, and decided to hasten back at once, and establish his winter quarters in the friendly cities of Poland. It was a march through a dreary and desolate region, of more than a thousand miles; but he put on a bold front, and the troops began to retire in good order. A week later, and the grand army was in full retreat. Bleak, chilly winds howled through the leafless trees; the weary soldiers were blinded by the flakes of snow and sleet; their embittered enemies attacked them in every unguarded point; order and discipline were forgotten; the ranks were broken, and each man struggled on as best he could; the dead and the dying were trodden down; hundreds of horses were slain for food; all ideas of conquest were banished; Napoleon himself left the army to its fate; and each day's weary march was marked by heaps of broken waggons, and abandoned cannon, and white hillocks of snow, beneath which the frozen bodies of man and beast were buried. With such a dreadful picture of misery before you, it will be easy to understand the tender compassion which prompted the Saviour to say, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." Especially ought we to remember those who are suffering the sad privations of poverty, and be glad to relieve their wants when we are able.

Ver. 22. *Danger of deception by false Christs.*—In the frescoes of Signorelli we have "The Teaching of Anticrist"—no repulsive figure, but a grand personage in flowing robes, and with a noble countenance, which at a distance might easily be taken for the Saviour. To him the crowd are eagerly gathering and listening, and it is only when you draw close that you can discover in his harder and cynical expression, and from the evil spirit whispering in his ear, that it is not Christ.

Ver. 28. *A sign of summer's approach.*—When Dr. Rees preached last in North Wales, a friend said to him, "You are whitening fast, Dr. Rees." The old gentleman did not say anything then; but when he got to the pulpit he referred to it, and said, "There is a wee white flower that comes up through the earth at this season of the year—sometimes it comes up through the snow and frost; but we are all glad to see the snow-drop, because it proclaims that the winter is over and that the summer is at hand. A friend reminded me last night that I was whitening fast. But heed not that, brother; it is to me a proof that my winter will soon be over, that I shall have done presently with the cold east winds and the frosts of earth, and that my summer—my eternal summer—is at hand."

Ver. 32. *Christ's second coming* is to be of awful suddenness, overtaking a careless world with surprise, and not wholly expected even by the faithful watchman. Of such a sudden and awful change perhaps a faint illustration may be found in the catastrophe which took place about a century ago, when in an Alpine valley the whole side of a mountain suddenly fell and overwhelmed the village below, crushing chalets and houses, burying the church, and covering with earth and stones a merry wedding-party that had just entered the doomed valley. To be without warning or preparation is the character of the Second Advent, as compared with the long-planned arrangements and the deep foundations laid for the First Coming.—*Dr. Hardman.*

Ver. 33. *"Watch and pray."*—The sentinel picketed to watch the enemy does his duty by giving the alarm if the enemy approaches, not by advancing single-handed to the conflict. So the duty of a Christian, watchfully discerning the approach of temptation, is to convey the case to God. It is foolhardiness to adventure into the combat unaided and unprovided for.

*Watchfulness and prayer.*—"I often recall," says an old sailor, "my first night at sea. A storm had come up, and we had put back under a point of land which broke the wind a little, but still the sea had a rake on us, and we were in danger of drifting. I

was on the anchor watch, and it was my duty to give warning in case the ship should drag her anchor. It was a long night to me. I was very anxious whether I should know if the ship really did drift. How could I tell? I found that, going forward and placing my hand on the chain, I could tell by the feeling of it whether the anchor was dragging or not; and how often that night I went forward and placed my hand on that chain! And very often since then I have wondered whether I am drifting away from God, and then I go away and pray. Sometimes during that long stormy night I would be startled by a rumbling sound, and I would put my hand on the chain, and find it was not the anchor dragging, but only the chain grating against the rocks on the bottom. The anchor was still firm. And sometimes now, in temptation and trial, I become afraid, and upon praying I find that away down deep in my heart I do love God, and my hope is in His salvation. And I want just to say a word to my fellow-Christians: Keep an anchor watch, lest before you are aware you may be upon the rocks."

Ver. 34. *Work for all.*—Let us be thankful that there is a growing and more universal recognition of the Bible teaching, that each individual believer has some apportioned work in the Church of God, some appropriate niche assigned him to fill in God's sanctuary. Just as it was of old in the Jewish Temple, extending from its outer gates and outer courts, to the rites of the Most Holy Place. Some were engaged in hewing fir and cedar logs for altar fuel: others disposing of the ashes of the sacrifices in the great conduits leading to the Kedron; some ministering as sacrificial priests; others occupied in ceremonial lustrations: some, more honoured, in bringing the golden bowl from Siloam at the Feast of Tabernacles. Here are the silver trumpeters who wake up the city at early morn to the duties of a new day, or at similar stated intervals proclaim the appearance of the new moon. Here are the sons of Korah mingling their voices with "kinnor" and cymbal-tones, chanting psalm and Hallel. Here the sympathetic and beneficent among the worshipping throng are seen as they retire, aiding with alms and deeds the cripples laid at "the Gate Beautiful." Here are the aged Annas and Simeons coming in to wait for the salvation of Israel; or to present once more their lowly tribute-offering, and sing their *nunc dimittis*. Here are the children of the Temple twisting wreaths of olive, myrtle, and palm, to greet their Lord with glad hosannas. This daily acted parable of the old Temple dispensation needs no further interpretation. The Great Master gives it in His own laconic words: "To every man his work."—*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*

*The joy of working for Christ.*—A beautiful incident in reference to Mr. Townsend is mentioned in the Life of John Campbell. "Finding him on Tuesday morning, shortly before his last illness, leaning on the balustrade of the staircase that led to the committee-room of the Tract Society, and scarcely able to breathe, I remarked, 'Mr. Townsend, is this you? Why should you come in this state of body to our meetings? You have now attended them for a long time, and you should leave the work to younger men.' The reply of Mr. Townsend was worthy of his character. Looking at his friend with a countenance brightened and elevated by the thoughts that were struggling for utterance, his words were, 'Oh! Johnny, Johnny, man, it is hard to give up working in the service of such a Master!'"

*This life the time for work.*—"Are you not wearying for the heavenly rest?" said Whitefield to an old minister. "No, certainly not!" he replied. "Why not?" was the surprised rejoinder. "Why, my good brother," said the aged saint, "if you were to send your servant into the fields to do a certain portion of work for you, and promised to give him rest and refreshment in the evening, what would you say if you found him languid and discontented in the middle of the day, and murmuring, 'Would to God it were evening'? Would you not bid him be up and doing, and finish his work, and then go home and enjoy the promised rest? Just so does God require of you and me that, instead of looking for Saturday night, we do our day's work in the day."

*The importance of vigilance.*—The duty entrusted to the porter is of great importance. His negligence lays the house open to every intruder. If the sentinel falls asleep at his post, the whole army may be surprised and cut off. If the man stationed at the gate is unfaithful, the fortress may be taken wit' out assault, and the whole garrison put to the sword. A man ignorant of the management of a ship, when he sees all hands busily at work, some climbing the mast, others loisting the sails, and others plying at the pump, will be apt to look on the pilot as a lazy supernumerary who spends his time in gazing idly at the stars, and amusing himself with turning a piece of timber from side to side, not aware that this man's services are of all others the most essential to the progress of the vessel on her way, and to the safety of all who are on board. In like manner, though there are Christian graces and duties which are of greater dignity, vigilance is of the greatest utility.

*Each at his post.*—An Arctic explorer found, floating helplessly about among the icebergs of that cold, lonely country, a ship. Going on board, he found that the captain was frozen, and sat dead at his log-book, while



the helmsman stood at his post, and the men on watch still on duty, but cold in death. What happiness will it be when our Lord comes to know we have done our duty, and can welcome our Saviour as He bids us "come up higher"!

Vers. 35-37. *On the watch.*—How many striking pictures this word brings before us! We may think of the old times when the first colonists settled in North America, when they had planted their log-wood cabin in the little clearing, but knew that the dark woods beyond might at any moment hide the fierce Red Indian. Dreading the treachery of the savage, how often the anxious settler would listen at night for any sound of danger, how carefully would he scan the shadowy edge of the forest! The loaded rifle is kept at hand, the faithful dog unchained. He is perpetually on the alert, watchful against the unseen but stealthy foe. Or the word suggests the watchfulness of a mother over a sick infant: how unweariedly she hangs over the cradle, how quickly she rises at the slightest sound! Or we may illustrate the word by the mariner who paces to and fro looking forth over the sea, lest his vessel should run upon some half-hidden and jagged rock; or the fisherman's wife placing her little taper in the window as she counts the number of the returning boats.

In daily life how important is watchfulness! A sailing yacht was cruising about the entrance of the English Channel. It was night, but a night clear from mist and fog, when the crew saw a huge steamship approaching. She came on straight in their direction; but as their yacht had lights hung out they felt no alarm, though the yacht could not get out of the way. But still closer and closer came the great steamer. In terror those on the yacht raised their voices and shouted with all their power. There was evidently no watch kept on the bow of the large vessel. Secure in her own strength, she swept onwards, and the crew of the little pleasure-boat foresaw that instant death was imminent; the monster ship would crush them down and pass over them and leave no trace behind. But at the very last moment, by God's mercy, she changed her course slightly, and passed close alongside instead of over

them, and they could note by the many lights in the cabins how merriment and occupations had caused a want of watchfulness which nearly destroyed a number of their fellow-men!—*Dr. Hardman.*

*Watchfulness constantly needed.*—No number of false alarms cancels the duty of watchfulness. In the town of Amyclæ, in Italy, false reports of the approach of the enemy had been so often spread that a law was passed forbidding any one to pay attention to them. In consequence of this, when the attack was really imminent, no one felt at liberty to heed the warning that was given, and the city was taken. From this circumstance the epithet of "Tacitæ" (silent) was given to Amyclæ.

*Watchfulness*—how important to the soldier! In the Middle Ages a town, strongly fortified, had often resisted siege or capture, but one day the gate was thrown open to receive a train of waggons loaded with hay and corn. One of them, accidentally as it seemed, for some trifling cause, stopped under the arch of the gateway. The soldiers on guard observed nothing suspicious in the occurrence, nor marked that the waggon had so stopped that neither could the gate be closed nor the portcullis lowered. A moment afterwards the loads of hay were cast aside, and bands of armed men leapt out from their concealment beneath! And thus the city was captured for lack of watchfulness.

*A Christian asleep.*—The devil held a great anniversary, at which his angels and ministers were called together to report the result of their several missions. "I let loose the wild beasts of the desert," said one, "on a caravan of Christians, and their bones are now bleaching on the sands." "What of that?" said the arch-fiend; "their souls are all saved." "I drove the east wind," said another, "against a ship freighted with Christians, and they were drowned every one." "What of that?" replied he again; "their souls were all saved." Then stood up a third, and he said, "For ten years I tried to get a single Christian asleep, and at last I succeeded, and left him so." Then the devil shouted, and the night stars of hell sang for joy.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Render:** *After two days was the Passover and the Azuma* (or Leavenless Feast). The Passover was the lamb slain on the 14th Nisan (Exod. xii. 6-11); the Azuma was the festival which began on 15th Nisan, and lasted seven days (Exod. xii. 15-20).

Vers. 3-9. This incident, which happened on the evening before Palm Sunday (chap. xi.), is inserted here in order to explain the circumstances that led to Christ's betrayal. It is recorded in a similar connexion by both Matthew (xxvi. 6-13) and John (xii. 1-8). Another anointing is mentioned in Luke vii. 36-50.

Ver. 3. **A woman.**—See John xi. 2. **An alabaster box.**—Omit "box." Vases or phials for holding unguents were made at *Alabastron* in Egypt out of a stone found in the neighbouring mountains, and so the word came to be used of any vessel employed for a purpose of that kind. **Spikenard.**—*Pure nard.* Pliny says (*Nat. Hist.*, xii. 26) that the nard leaf, especially the best, was often adulterated with a very common herb.

Vers. 4, 5. This indignant murmuring began with Judas (John xii. 4). **Three hundred pence.**—Equal in purchasing power to £30 of our money—a "denarius" being the day's wage of a labourer.

Ver. 8. **Come aforehand.**—*She took the initiative as to anointing*, etc. The word occurs elsewhere only in 1 Cor. xi. 21, and (passive) Gal. vi. 1.

Ver. 10. **To betray.**—*That he might deliver Him to them.* Perhaps his thought was: "The Master Himself declares His death and burial are at hand. He has said over and over again that He must be delivered unto the chief priests. Why, then, should not I win their favour, and at the same time earn some money, by helping them to apprehend Him quietly?"

Ver. 12. **The first day, etc.**—14th Nisan—Thursday in Holy Week. The previous day had been spent in seclusion at Bethany, which "was reckoned as regards religious purposes part of Jerusalem by the Rabbis, and the lamb might be eaten there, though it must be killed at the Temple" (Lightfoot, *Hor. Heb.*).

Ver. 13. **Two of His disciples.**—Peter and John (Luke xxii. 8). **A man bearing, etc.**—It being essential to Christ's plan that He should not be arrested before His celebration of the Passover, He did not divulge to His apostles until the last moment the place where it was to be held. Probably He had made some private arrangement with a trusty disciple living in Jerusalem to send a man-servant (instead of a woman, as was usual) for water at a particular time of day. Possibly the man-servant was also a disciple and in the secret.

Ver. 14. **The guest-chamber.**—*My lodging-place*: *κατάλυμα*, rendered "inn" in Luke ii. 7.

Ver. 15. **Furnished.**—The couches for reclining on set in order and spread with carpets. **Prepared.**—*Ready* for the due celebration of the Passover, so far as the room was concerned—every particle of leaven having been cleared out. **There make ready.**—By procuring the lamb, the unleavened cakes, the cups of wine and water, the bitter herbs, and the sauce. Some of these would perhaps be provided by the master of the house, but there is great uncertainty as to what exactly took place.

Ver. 16. **The Passover.**—An account of the ritual may conveniently be inserted here. (1) Two or three flat cakes of unleavened bread, and four cups of red wine mixed with water, were placed before the master of the house, or the most eminent person present, who was called the Celebrant or President. (2) All present having reclined, he took one of the cups, known as the "Cup of Consecration," gave thanks, tasted the cup, and passed it round. (3) Water was brought in, and the President washed his hands ceremonially. (4) There were placed on the table the bitter herbs (lettuce, endive, beet, succory, horehound), the sauce called "Charoseth" (made of dates, raisins, figs, vinegar, etc., pounded and mixed together), and the Passover lamb. (5) After again thanking God for the fruits of the earth, the President took a portion of the bitter herbs "the size of an olive," dipped it in the Charoseth and ate it, and his example was followed by the rest. (6) The second cup of wine was filled, after which began the "Haggadah" or "Shewing forth" (1 Cor. xi. 26). A child or proselyte inquired, "What mean ye by this service?" (Exod. xii. 26), and the President answered according to a prescribed formula. The first part of the "Hallel" (Ps. cxiii., cxiv.) was then sung, and the second cup solemnly drunk. (7) The President again washed his hands (the rest doing so also), and taking two of the unleavened cakes, broke them, gave thanks, and distributed to the company. Each, on receiving his portion, wrapped bitter herbs round it, dipped it in the "Charoseth," and ate it. (8) The flesh of the lamb was then eaten. (9) After thanksgiving, the third cup ("Cup of Blessing") was handed round. (10) Thanks were given for the food received and for redemption from Egypt, the fourth

cup ("Cup of Joy") was drunk, the second part of the "Hallel" (Ps. cxv.-cxviii.) was sung, and the company dispersed.

Ver. 17. **In the evening.**—After sunset on Thursday—the beginning of 15th Nisan—the proper paschal night.

Ver. 18. **Sat.**—*Reclined on the divans.* The original standing posture (Exod. xii. 11) had long been abandoned. Render last part of verse: *One out of you (among you; but not of you) will deliver Me—he that is eating with Me.*

Ver. 21. The order of the words in the last clause, and the intrinsic meaning of *καλόν*, incline one to render thus: *An excellent thing were it for Him (the Son of Man) if there had not been born that man* (the man who, while an apostle, becomes a traitor); and the meaning may perhaps be, that the burden pressing on Christ's soul would have been infinitely easier to bear had His apprehension not come about by the agency of His own familiar friend. Earlier in the verse He exclaims, *Alas for that man!* thinking, apparently, of the self-reproach that would overwhelm Judas, almost the moment the deed was done.

Ver. 22. **Took bread.**—One of the unleavened cakes lying on the table. **Blessed.**—*Spoke the word for good:* the word (*λόγος*), for good (*εὖ*). So in the Latin, *benedicimus* = we utter the word *bene*, i.e. *bene fiat*. "Cum Deus bene dicit, tum bene est: cum homo, tum ut bene fiat." See the profound note by Prof. T. S. Evans on 1 Cor. x. 16 in the *Speaker's Commentary*. **Eat.**—Imported from Matt. xxvi. 26, where genuine. A very natural addition, as of course it is implied. **This is My body.**—The copula means neither "represents" nor "symbolises," but simply *is*. The Lord is pleased to establish the most intimate relation possible between the consecrated elements and His sacred humanity. The faithful communicant, when he receives the Eucharistic bread and wine, eats the flesh and drinks the blood of the Son of Man (John vi. 53-56). It ought not to be necessary to add that "this is a great mystery," and that the eating and drinking are purely spiritual acts—and, because spiritual, therefore most real and true.

Ver. 23. **Given thanks.**—*I.e.* for *εὖ* or God's good gifts of bread and wine: the idea of *thanks* is exhausted in the *χαίς*. So Prof. Evans on 1 Cor. xi. 24.

Ver. 24. **Of the new testament.**—Omit "new," and render: *of the covenant*—*i.e.* of the arrangement (*διαθήκη*) which God has graciously made for restoring to man his lost inheritance. From first to last God has entertained but one grand scheme of mercy to our fallen race; but this scheme, when our Lord spoke, had been manifested in its initial stage only (see Exod. xxiv. 4-8), which was a shadow cast before of the great reality to be revealed in due time. Since, however, the Jews had mistaken the shadow for the reality, and were for the most part content to offer and rest in material sacrifices which could never take away sins, it became necessary to differentiate the true plan of salvation through the blood of Christ from the preparatory sacrificial system of Israel which merely typified it. This was done by terming the one the "old covenant," and the other the "new." See Jer. xxxi. 31-34; Luke xxii. 20; 1 Cor. xi. 25; Heb. ix. 15, 18-22, xii. 24. But both here and in Matt. xxvi. 28 the word "new" is not found. **Shed.**—*Being shed:* Christ was there and then offering His precious blood for the sins of the whole world. **For many.**—*In behalf of many:* *ὑπέρ* = *super, over*, the essential idea being that of a person bending over another—in New Testament never in a physical, always in a moral sense. The Redeemer bent His mind over many—even the whole race of men—when He laid down His life to effect their salvation (1 John ii. 2).

Ver. 25. See Rev. xix. 9. **Kingdom of God.**—With the announcement of the kingdom's immanence Christ's ministry began (Mark i. 15); with the prophecy of that kingdom's perfect consummation and bliss it fitly ends.

Ver. 27. **An hymn.**—Second part of Hallel (Ps. cxv.-cxviii.); for no doubt the first part (cxiii., cxiv.) had been sung in its usual place earlier in the evening.

Vers. 27-31. See R.V. for reading and rendering.

Ver. 32. **Gethsemane.**—*I.e.* *Oil-press.* The traditional site is a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives on the north-west, where still are to be seen eight olive trees, believed to be over two thousand years old.

Ver. 33. **Sore amazed.**—*Filled with consternation* at the thought of all He must pass through ere He reached the goal. **Very heavy.**—Uncertain whether *ἀδμονεύειν* is derived from *ἀδμος*, "away from home," or *ἀδην*, "uneasily": in either case it expresses the yearning of heart-sickness. The two words are most aptly chosen to depict the feelings of one "surrounded with sorrow," as Christ Himself describes His position in next verse.

Ver. 36. **Abba.**—The very word used by Christ. Peculiar to Mark. **Take away this cup from Me.**—His soul "exceeding sorrowful unto death," Christ feared apparently that the agony He was enduring might snap asunder the thin thread of His life there and then. He therefore prays for strength to reach the Cross, there to complete the offering of Himself as a ransom for the sins of the world. This may be the meaning of Heb. v. 7. **Nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt.**—The sublime self-sacrifice of the preceding clause is intensified by this. He had said long before, "I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all men



unto Me." But it seemed, in the garden, as if He were not to be lifted up on the Cross after all—as if His life-work might be frustrated at the very last, by His physical strength not holding out long enough. Even to this He resigns Himself, if it be the Father's will. See *Expository Times*, vol. vi, No. 10, pp. 433, 434.

Ver. 41. The meaning of ἀπὲς being uncertain, and the punctuation being equally undetermined, Christ's words here are susceptible of very different interpretations: (1) *Sleep and rest for the time that remains*; he (the traitor) is far away. Then, after an interval: *The hour has come*, etc. (2) *Sleep and rest for the time that remains*. Then, after an interval: *Enough! the hour has come*, etc. (3) *Are you sleeping and resting for the time that remains?* Enough! *The hour has come*, etc.

Ver. 48. **Thief**—*Robber, or bandit.*

Ver. 51. **A linen cloth**.—*A sindon*—either a garment or bed-covering made of linen or muslin manufactured in Sind.

Ver. 53. **With him were assembled**.—*There come with him* or *There come together unto him.*

Ver. 54. **The palace**.—*The court of the palace.* **At the fire**.—*Beside the light of the fire.*

Ver. 58. **Within three days**.—*After three days*: δὲ. For similar construction see Mark ii. 1; Acts xxiv. 17; Gal. ii. 1.

Ver. 72. **When he thought thereon**. A good rendering, if ἐπιβάλων means *having cast his mind over the matter*. But, as this verb is used not many verses back (ver. 46) of a physical action, it may be best to adopt Theophylact's explanation—*having cast his mantle over his head*. So (of recent English scholars) Dean Blakesley, Prof. Evans, and Dr. F. Field—a remarkable consensus of independent judgment on a knotty point.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—11.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxvi. 1-16; LUKE xxii. 1-6; JOHN xii. 1-8.)

*The anointing of Christ's body to the burying.* I. **The feast and the anointing**.—"Jesus, six days before the Passover"—the last Passover He was to celebrate with His disciples before He suffered—"came to Bethany, where Lazarus was," whom He had, a short time before, "raised from the dead." "There"—"in the house of Simon the leper"—"they made Him a supper," at which were present, in different capacities, all three members of that family which is distinguished above all others as "the family which Jesus loved." "Martha served," i.e. attended to the preparation and management of the feast—an employment suited to her character and abilities, and deserving of praise rather than blame if confined within the bounds of a decent hospitality, and a proper attention to the comforts of the guests. Lazarus, the dead-alive, was "one of those who sat at table with" Jesus. Mary, the other sister, on this as on a former occasion (Luke x. 39), is found still "choosing the better part": for which she draws upon herself, as before, the censure of those who could not appreciate her conduct, and the approbation of her Divine Lord. This time Mary, "having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious, brake the box, and poured it on His head," anointed also His feet, wiping them with her hair—an action which, according to the habits of those days, expressed the highest possible respect and veneration for the Person so honoured. And not that Person only, but the whole company, came in for a share of the gratification which such a costly preparation of the apothecary's art was adapted to convey to the senses; nay, so diffusive was the benefit, that "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

II. **The objection made by Judas and others**. All were benefited; but not all were pleased. There was one in particular whom neither the honour paid to his Master nor the enjoyment afforded to himself could restrain from giving vent to the ill-humour which this proceeding had excited in his breast (John xii. 4, 5); and his specious complaint is quickly taken up by others (Matt. xxvi. 8, 9). The objection, were it ever so valid in itself, was not so in the mouth of Judas, not being made in good faith (John xii. 6). Our Lord

and His disciples, on the principle that "the labourer is worthy of his hire," subsisted on the contributions of the charitably-disposed. These were deposited in a box like that described in 2 Kings xii. 9. Our Lord's was a *poor-box*, both as receiving the money contributed for the support of such poor men as Himself and His immediate followers, and also because distribution was made out of it to those whose wants were more pressing than their own (John xiii. 29). This box was placed in the custody of Judas, our Lord's design probably being to soothe and partially gratify his mercenary instincts, and thus save him from falling into those grosser offences of dishonesty and treachery which he afterwards committed. But so deep-rooted was his ruling passion, that the very expedient which was intended to keep him out of temptation only served to lead him into it: not content with having the keeping of the box, he also purloined its contents; and, so far from caring for the poor, actually embezzled the funds set apart for them.

**III. The vindication of Mary by our Lord.**—Judas, when he made this objection, spoke in bad faith, and therefore deserved no answer. But as there were others present, who may have sincerely thought that here was an extravagant outlay, and that the money might have been better spent, our Lord vouchsafes a reply, both for their satisfaction, and for the instruction of all to whom this gospel should come (vers. 6-9). 1. The judgment which had been passed on the proceeding was equally rash and uncharitable. Hasty censure is always to be avoided, especially in the presence of those more competent to express an opinion. If Mary's conduct had been really blamable, there was One present who might have rebuked her with authority. But He did not. After that, to trouble or find fault with her was to cast reflexions on Him. If she was wrong in committing the act, He was wrong in permitting it. But He does not vindicate Himself—that was unnecessary. He interferes solely on the woman's account. "Let her alone; why trouble ye her?" Munificence like hers, even if it were misdirected, should rather be encouraged than checked. Such examples are not likely to be generally followed. But was this woman's liberality misdirected? Jesus emphatically declares it was not. "She hath wrought a good work on Me." The cost of this ointment would have procured her many luxuries, which she has chosen to go without, in order that nothing may be wanting to the honour and gratification of her Lord. She has set an example of self-denial and consecration of her talents to the service of religion, much needed in a world where "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." 2. "The poor" having been mentioned, Jesus would not have it supposed for a moment that their interests were with Him a matter of secondary importance. Therefore, before going on to reveal the true significance and appropriateness of Mary's action, He pauses a moment to shew that His approval and acceptance of her offering is by no means to be considered a disparagement of the proposed alternative. "There is a time," He says, "for everything; and the present is a very peculiar time, and has a duty which can be performed at no other time. That duty is, to pay the last honours to the person of your dying Master and Lord. I go; but I leave the poor behind Me. Do them good, when you can do Me no more good." Or rather, "Do them good, and you will still be doing Me good" (Matt. xxv. 40). 3. We are not to understand, by the words "She is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying," that Mary was aware of her Lord's imminent death, or that she entertained any expectation of it. No reason can be assigned why she alone, of all His disciples, should have been able to penetrate the mystery in which everything connected with His death and passion was, up to that time, enveloped. Indeed, had she foreseen the events of the next few days, she would surely have kept this ointment a little longer, and poured it upon the

lifeless clay, instead of the warm flesh and blood, of her beloved Lord. Jesus, therefore, in these words kindly puts a construction upon her action of which she herself had no idea, taking occasion, at the same time, to give a clearer intimation of coming events than He had yet done.

IV. The purposes for which this incident was recorded.—1. First, and specially, as a just tribute of honour to the woman herself (ver. 9). 2. Secondly, in common with all Scripture, “for our learning.” (1) Learn hence a lesson of generous self sacrifice in the promotion of God’s honour and our Master’s cause. In such a cause there is room not only for liberality, but also for that unstinted profuseness which may, now and then, go beyond the mark, and require to be restrained, rather than stimulated, by those whose duty it is to direct it. See Exod. xxxvi. 5, 6; Acts iv. 34-37; 2 Cor. viii. 1-4. (2) Remember that the poor are Christ’s peculiar legacy to His Church. Who would not feel honoured to be entrusted with such a charge? Who would not be anxious to acquit himself, to the utmost of his power, of the obligations of it? (3) Since we have not our Lord Himself always with us, and can no longer do honour to His person, let us take every opportunity of shewing our dutiful respect for His memory. Mary “did what she could.” It was not in her power to avert the Great Sacrifice which was foreordained from before the foundation of the world, or even to retard it for a single day; but what she did was not the less “a good work,” nor she who did it the less blessed in her deed. Let us follow her example as best we may. If we cannot anoint our Lord’s body for the burying, let us at least embalm the memory of His precious death and passion in our heart of hearts, and let us thankfully receive those holy mysteries in which He is pleased to convey to us the spiritual benefits pertaining thereto.

Vers. 6-9. *Christ honouring loving service.*—Of all who were present, no one seems to have taken the woman’s part except Jesus. But that exception made up for the lack of all else. He defended her from their attack; He vindicated the wisdom and rightness of her deed. But He did more. He uttered words revealing His appreciation, and securing its undying honour.

I. Jesus speaks of “this gospel.” Gospel is a familiar term, but, like many other familiar words, it is often used without any idea as to what it means. To many the term expresses the summation of theology with all its abstractions and metaphysics—a subject that, as regarded by them, has little to attract, and as little to profit. To others the gospel means religion, and religion, as they regard it, with its impossible requirements and irksome ordinances. The gospel is simply God’s spell, *i.e.* God’s story. And just because it is God’s spell it is a good spell, the spell or story of Him who is pre-eminently the good. There are many gospels—endless varieties of good tidings, and of good tidings of great joy. Any news that brings gladness to the heart, any intelligence from near or far that relieves from fear and fills the mouth with laughter or with song is a gospel—that is, it is good news. But we do not call such news a gospel. We reserve that term for God’s news. It is not theology or religion, and it is nothing that is undesirable or hurtful; but it is the blissful announcement that Jesus lived and died and rose again on our behalf. It is the good news of a Divine and All-sufficient Helper for us who were without strength. It is the good news of Christ having done, in the grace of God, on our behalf, not only what we could not do for ourselves, but all that was needful to be done in order to our salvation. This is the gospel we preach. There are other good things, but this is the best.

II. Christ intimates that this gospel is to be preached in the whole world.—There are little gospels of men, human inventions sought sometimes to be put



into the place of God's gospel. They create a stir for a little while and within a little sphere, but it is only for a little while and within a little sphere. Our candles burn out, but the sun shines on. The gospel, however, is not only not to die out, but it is to be spread abroad. That is the work assigned to the redeemed Church, the duty to which it is specially called. Here a Church may be negligent; there one professing himself to be wise may urge what he deems to be a better way; yonder another may venture to go farther and condemn even the little that is being done to win the world to Christ; but all these things do not alter by a thousandth part the reality of obligation, do not recall by a shadow the "marching orders" given by the Leader of the redeemed hosts of God. Of course there are still those who tell us that charity begins at home; but it is getting to be discovered that they very truthfully describe their own charity—it begins at home, and it stays there, for it is a kind of weak invalid, not strong enough by any means to venture outside. They tell us that zeal for the foreign field leads to neglect of the home field, although, from all Christendom, they cannot quote one exception to the rule that as the missionary spirit grows in any Church it increases its home power and labour. The early Church did not first do all that could be done at home before thought was taken for those outside. It did not first spend all that it needed on itself, and then give the remainder, if remainder there happened to be, to the conquest of the world. It acted in a different spirit; for it acted in the spirit of Him who desired that this great gospel of love, this great story of salvation, should be spread throughout the whole world.

III. **Love of Christ is the proof and test of discipleship.**—The religion of Christ is distinguished by many features from all other professed religions, but by no feature more than this; that it demands love for its Author. It is true that not love but faith is the condition of salvation. But then faith is thus set as the condition only that love may be reached. There cannot be love till there is faith. Christ must be recognised, seen somewhat as He is, and believed in as worthy of trust, before love can be felt. Hence faith must precede love—faith, not love, must be the condition of salvation. But if faith be the condition of salvation, love is largely salvation itself. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

IV. **The reward accorded by Christ to personal devotion.**—It was a bold thing for any one to promise. It shews the marvellous self-consciousness of Christ that He pledged remembrance and fame. Such language on the lips of any mere man would be insufferable. The egotism would disgust; the bombast would anger. But Christ was no mere man. In the consciousness that He was more than man—that in Him as the Divine One was all that men could need—He bade men come to Him, proclaimed Himself their life and light, and declared that without Him they could do nothing. And so here He pledges immortality of renown. No one else could have done that. Only He who is Lord of all and the Father of the ages.—*G. Gladstone.*

Vers. 10, 11. **Judas Iscariot.**—There are three motives which lead men to attach themselves to a new movement. Men may be moved either by conviction, or by contagious enthusiasm, or by self-interest. To this last class belonged Judas.

I. **In a double sense he came from without.**—He came from a distance; his nature was never stirred by the passing sincerity of contagious enthusiasm. He threw in his lot with the followers of Christ with deliberation, and with faith, only so far as calculation is faith. He did believe that our Lord would achieve a great success; he may have believed, as others did, though with more self-interested speculativeness than others, that the new Prophet was the

Messiah, the destined King. At any rate the venture is worth some risk. He joins the society. His gifts win for him a place among the foremost. Whenever good fortune smiles, he cannot fail to share in it. And good fortune seemed to smile. The great works of Christ and His mighty and enthralling words drew the people; they heard Him gladly. The impression of His greatness deepened and spread. Impression grew into expectation. Expectation became impatient. The Prophet Teacher must submit to the people's will. They determined to take Him by force and make Him a king. All this Judas must have perceived; and the gladness of imminent success must have been his. But the attitude of our Lord at this moment must have surprised many. Instead of courting this popular movement, He retired from it. He withdrew Himself; and His withdrawal chilled the growing enthusiasm. Changes in the popular mood are readily gauged by those who touch the world on its financial side, and Judas' position gave him opportunity of noticing the first symptoms of waning popularity. He felt the pulse of public opinion, and he knew when it began to beat with calmness; he could calculate that calmness might lapse into indifference. A little, a very little change in the popular temper, and the whole situation would be reversed; and Judas would find that he had cast in his lot with a losing and not with a winning cause. Now what would be the natural conduct of a person without any moral convictions under such circumstances? He must, to use a slang expression, hedge; so that, whatever happened, he would be safe to win. And this is precisely what Judas does. Without breaking with the party of Christ, he opens up negotiations with the other side. It is the precaution of worldly wisdom. Judas is the type of the man who has no principle. He is for God or for God's enemies with equal readiness, so long as he himself is safe.

**II. Judas did not fall at once and unwarned.**—Characters grow: the features which attract or repel us are products of will and circumstances; for character is not a gift, but a formation. Judas had the same chances of better things which his brother-apostles had. There were mixed motives, no doubt, in the hearts of all. The comrades of Judas had weaknesses and worldly desires, even as he had; but they yielded themselves to the good influence which was so near them. But in Judas the self-interest was allowed to grow; he fostered it in thought; he nourished it by habitual embezzlements of the funds entrusted to him. Character grows from habits; and he adopted bad ones. This was not all. He thrust away from himself the helping hand which Christ's love extended to him. From the earliest time to the latest moment Christ sought to save the traitor from himself. Let us recall Christ's method. He did not receive recruits without caution. He sought to arm with weapons against self-deception those who volunteered to follow Him. Above all things, He made it clear that riches and worldly wealth were not to be looked for by those who would come after Him. Not unwarned then (we may well conclude) did Judas attach himself to Christ's company. There were after-warnings also. Generally the tone of our Lord's teaching respecting worldliness was one constant warning. But besides this there were utterances of our Lord's which, in the light of Judas' character, sound like direct and special efforts to awake him from his dream of self. We may, for example, read in the light of Judas' designs the parable of the unjust steward. The faithless steward may secure for himself a refuge among those partners of his guilt whom he has placed under an obligation—yes, in the world, in earthly habitations, it may be so; but such methods will secure no welcome, when men fail, in eternal habitations. Or, again, the parable of the wedding garment had its message for the traitor. It was one thing to refuse to come to the wedding; it was another to come, and to come in the beggarly array of one's worldliness. Still more emphatic

is the warning given at the time when our Lord had by His action refused the kingdom, and when consequently doubts began to grow strong in the mind of Judas. "Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Must not the soul of Judas have whispered to itself, "It is I. To this image must I come if I allow this thing to gain the mastery over me"? Christ's efforts to save His disciple sinking into such an abyss of baseness did not end here. As the crisis draws near, He puts forth fresh and final attempts to save him. "Ye are not all clean," He said, at the time when it was not yet too late for the traitor to cleanse his fault. But the words of Christ wake no softening thoughts in the traitor's mind. One more effort Christ will make. At the supper table He quotes the words, "He that eateth My bread hath lifted up his heel against Me" (John xiii. 18). Later still more explicitly, "One of you shall betray Me" (John xiii. 21). Even then it was not too late. The last step had not been taken by Judas. But, as with a man sliding down a steep place, the impetus of temptation was too strong. He takes the food from the hand of Christ. There is a treachery in the doing so; the Nemesis of base acts is further baseness. "After the sop Satan entered into him" (John xiii. 27). The crisis is passed at that moment. He will not turn back now. "That thou doest, do quickly" (John xiii. 27). "He went out straightway; and it was night." An hour later his treason was an accomplished fact. The inward story of Judas' life is a story of help refused and warning disregarded. The tender efforts of his Lord and Master to save him are put away.

III. **How far did Judas understand these efforts of Christ on his behalf?**—They were warnings to his spirit; the warnings were directed primarily, and at first exclusively, to the moral sense of the man. Christ did not wish Judas to be moved merely by motives of personal alarm, and under their influence alone to abandon his scheme. He sought to awaken the man's moral sense against himself. But later He brings to bear upon Judas the force of the less worthy motive. He gives the hints of coming betrayal. But Judas, though warned, has dulled his soul by sin. The full significance of all that our Lord spoke does not reach him. Only at the very last, it appears, does he realise that he may be suspected, and even to the moment of the treacherous kiss he hopes that it is other treachery than his own which is known to Christ. Worldly wisdom outwits itself, as vaulting ambition overleaps itself and falls on the other side. The schemer imagines that he has covered the whole ground with his eye before he lays his plans, but there is always a blind spot in his field of vision. Indulging in a secret sin, and judging everything by the standard of his own interests, the sight of anything which conflicts with his interests exasperates Judas. This is the explanation of his astonishing and rash outburst of temper at Bethany. Although he veiled his real meaning by some words about the poor, yet the irritation which he displayed might have provoked suspicion. His speech was imprudent. It may be that he has aroused suspicion. This being so, it is high time that he should secure himself, and take those steps which will open to him retreat and good fortune should the Prophet of Galilee fail. He takes the step; he makes the bargain with the priests; he makes one fatal blunder—his greedy spirit compels him to accept the paltry and inadequate sum of money which was offered. But it is not part of his policy to forsake the discipleship of Christ. It is still possible that Christ may declare Himself with invincible might, and seize in some unexpected way the crown which He seems to have refused. He takes his place with the rest of the disciples. He will keep up the appearance of friendliness and loyalty to the last. Yes, even though it involves the crowning baseness of the hypocrite kiss. "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke xxii. 48). Judas cannot doubt now that his treason is known. And yet, these other words, "Friend,



do that for which thou art come" (Matt. xxvi, 50); what might they mean? What might they not? His Master calls him friend, and seemingly acquiesces in what has been done. Can it be that his Master accepts the situation, and sees in it an opportunity for some splendid manifestation of power? Will victory dawn out of the hour of disaster? And if so, may not he, Judas, who devised this thing, yet be reckoned as an instrument of the triumph?

IV. All illusions are soon at an end. His Master is condemned. All worldly hopes in that direction have disappeared. He has, however, the other side to depend on. He will be honoured in the means of what the priestly party will consider a national triumph. He visits the priests, and, with an affectation of misgiving, expresses doubts concerning his own action. Does he think that they will pamper and coax him, laugh at his misgivings, and belaud him as a patriot who has despatched well of the powers that be? He is quickly undeceived. In the eyes of the priests he is a paid spy, and nothing more. The scales fall from his eyes now. He has sacrificed place, credit, character, friends—and for what? Thirty pieces of silver—of what possible use are these to him? He flings down the price of blood. He goes out alone. He is alone indeed. He has no way to turn. He thought his skill had kept one door open to himself; but both doors are closed upon him. "What shall I do? I cannot die: to beg I am ashamed." Did the words come back to him now that his clever device had ended so disastrously? Did he now see that the habitations of worldly men were cruel? Did he see that worldly policy, however much it may be commended, is scorned in heaven? Was that which now, by his own action, seemed unattainable perceived at last to be most desirable? Does it dawn upon his mind now that there is a nobler victory in patience and weakness, even when it suffers, than in hard and unscrupulous triumph? Does that spiritual kingdom seem to his alienated spirit to be a land very far off when now at length he begins to guess at the beauty of its King? Struck down by the heavy blow of disappointment, failure, disaster, he realised now the measureless spiritual distance which he had placed between himself and his Lord. He was as a man placed upon a thin strip of coast, hemmed in behind by hard, unscaleable rocks, and fronting the inexorable waves of the incoming tide. He had no power to take up life again by repentance, and to seek to undo the past by earnest and humble work for others. There seemed nothing for it but to lay down that life which he had not the moral earnestness to value nor the moral courage to face.

V. Is the picture of Judas an unusual one? Is it only once in a century or a millennium that such a character presents itself? A man possessed of sagacity and shrewdness learns to balance probabilities of success and to ignore the consideration of principle. Enthusiasm for right is inconvenient. Fidelity to conviction, to truth, to honour, interferes sadly with his worldly prospects. Conscience is a troublesome fellow-voyager. It is better that it should be put overboard. The only purpose of life is success. Is the picture far to seek? Yet, wherever such men are to be found, they are the incipient Iscariots of the world. Nay, such are already traitors at heart—traitors to themselves, to mankind, and to God. Absorbing devotion to self disintegrates the character. In the flood time of temptation it goes to pieces. Absorbing devotion to the other One than self, to Him who alone is the true centre of life, consolidates, strengthens, invigorates the character. Day by day those so devoted grow to firmer mould and nobler stature. They are in Christ's hands, and none can pluck them thence. They fall not; they are founded on a rock.—*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*

# OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *The conspiracy of the priests.*—As the priests, with whatever misgivings, had resolved not to recognise Jesus as the Christ, it was inevitable that they should conspire against Him. Not only had He worsted them in every controversy in which they had engaged Him, and put them to shame before the people whom they despised but courted—not only had He proved them to be ignorant of the very Scriptures of which they professed to hold the key: He had also denounced them as disloyal to their Master in heaven, and had invoked on them “woes” so searching and scathing as to pierce even their hard hearts, and to bring a blush even to their brows of brass. And the people had rallied to Him; He was “walking about” in the Temple as if it belonged to *Him* rather than to *them*, and enchanting the ears of those on whom they had always securely counted to listen with unbounded deference and admiration. There was not, in fine, room for them and for Him; as He increased they must decrease; and hence they met with a common determination to make an end of Him. Their private animosities were forgotten in the presence of a common danger; and Pharisees and Sadducees, Herodians and Hebrews, elders and scribes, priests and laymen, united for a time against Him who was shaking the very foundations of their authority and power. They met at the house of Caiaphas, hard by the Temple, on the evening of the very day (Tuesday) on which they had been worsted and put to shame. Of the course of their discussion we are told nothing; but the two decisions at which they arrived are recorded. They were (1) that He must be put to death with the least possible delay; and (2) that it would not be safe to proceed against Him until the immense multitude of pilgrims had left Jerusalem: “They said [they kept saying], Not during the feast,

lest haply there should be a tumult of the people.” But at the very time at which they were saying, “Not till *after* the feast,” Jesus was forewarning His disciples that “after two days,” on the day on which the feast began, He would be delivered up and crucified! What, then, was it which led them to abandon their resolution, and constrained them to carry out not their own counsel, but “the determinate foreknowledge” of God? Before their meeting was over, as we learn from Luke, an event, wholly unexpected by them, had happened, which held out to them the hope of carrying out their cruel and wicked purpose sooner than they had anticipated, and without exciting the tumult which they dreaded. Judas Iscariot had at last made up his mind to betray the Master who had disappointed all his hopes of wealth and distinction; and, on gaining access to them, had covenanted to deliver Him to the priests secretly, “without tumult.” Providence itself would seem, to some of them, to have come to their help, although in the questionable shape of a thief and a traitor. Hence they rescinded their former resolution, and entered on a course in which they exactly fulfilled the prediction of Jesus. *After two days* He was delivered up to them, and crucified.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

Vers. 3-9. *The anointing at Bethany.*—1. In Christ's company it is possible to have the extremes of character and disposition. The self-denying, loving woman, and the selfish and avaricious professing disciple. 2. Hypocrisy will always uncloak itself to sneer at deeds of loving sacrifice. 3. In Christ's company the heart lovingly devoted to Him must be prepared for bitter trials. There are Judases and murmurers. 4. Right doing, based on simple, loving faith in Jesus, will be cherished and remembered by the Master, though despised by men.—*J. E. Haugreaves.*

*A woman's devotion to Christ—*

**I. Displayed.**—1. Upon a public occasion. A great supper. 2. In time of danger. Near crucifixion. 3. After a great blessing. Resurrection of Lazarus. 4. Beautiful in its traits. (1) Costly. (2) Modest. (3) Loving. (4) Suitable. (5) Pleasant.

**II. Condemned.**—1. By one closely allied to Christ. Profession is not piety. 2. In a secular spirit. 3. In the name of philanthropy. 4. For his own benefit.

**III. Defended.**—1. Christ prohibits interference with it. 2. He announces it as exactly seasonable. 3. He accepts it as sublimely useful. She did more than she thought. Goodness immortal in its results.—*B. D. Johns.*

**Ver. 3. *Love the best motive for work.***—It is not good to set about the performance even of right things from second-rate motives, for the action thus inspired must of necessity be second-rate also. We dwarf our best actions, and get into stereotyped modes of service, which tend to formalism, simply because we do not work from personal love to the living, personal Christ. See how Mary's love operated. It would not let her be content with simply doing duty and acting after the precedent of others. Duty is very good when you can get nothing better, but after all it is a cold and somewhat stern mistress. He who works from a sense of duty generally seeks to get off with doing as little as he can, and will not undertake anything that is not prescribed. But he who works from the impulse of love is constantly trying how much he can do for Jesus. Had Mary waited for a precedent; she had never done this action which so gladdened the Redeemer's heart. How much of the Christian effort of these days is mere imitation! Mary had her own reasons for loving the Lord, and she took her own way of shewing her love. So it ought to be with us. No human thing, no earthly model, no precedent, should shut out from our view the Lord, and to Him everything ought to be rendered. This will give

inventiveness and originality to our piety, so that the offering brought by each shall have as much individuality and distinctiveness about it as there is about the fragrance of the lily or the perfume of the violet.—*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*

**Vers. 4, 5. *Christian liberality.***—The nearest parallel in our own day is where lavish expenditure is made upon objects which, however intimately connected with the honour of religion, are yet not strictly necessary—such as the erection of new churches of noble design and costly construction, or the handsome and lavish adorning of the old. In such cases there is always some narrow-minded person ready to cry out, "Why this waste of what might have been given to the poor?" And though we do not desire to impute to any man other motives than those he avows, yet this we may safely say: that such objectors are not generally observed to care or to do more for the poor than those whom they condemn. Such an outlay as Mary's was, may, it is true, arise from mere ostentation; and then it is liable to the charge not only of extravagance, but of hypocrisy. But when it is prompted by love unfeigned, and by a sincere desire to spare no expense in doing honour to the Greatest of Benefactors and the Best of Friends, it is not only commendable in itself, but it will always be found united with an equally unstinted expenditure on those objects which are strictly charitable. So true it is that "the liberal man deviseth liberal things"; whereas a covetous person is never without an excuse for saving his money, whether the Saviour's person is to be honoured or His poor to be fed.

*Profusion is not necessarily waste.*—No one will doubt that there is a law of utility, a law of economy, which man must observe; but we must also learn that there are spheres of motive and duty where the rigid laws of utility will not apply and where economy is niggard. God teaches this in creation,



where "Beauty and Utility walked hand in hand." He teaches it in His Holy Word, where truth is unfolded to us clad in infinite loveliness.—*H. M. Jackson.*

*All is not waste that looks like waste.*—Had Mary been hindered from discharging herself of the emotion that swelled within her and panted for some escape, *then* there would have been waste. She would have been defrauded of increase in love. The permitted expression of it according to its own impulse nourished and fed it, and left her so much more qualified and provided to be a blessing to the poor. To let me have my way sometimes in expending freely upon a sentiment, a fine or tender sentiment, without reference to utility or thought of other and more serviceable channels in which my energy might flow—*this* is not waste, inasmuch as it helps to enlarge and elevate me, and thus conduces to render me more capable and prepared to do good.—*N. R. Wood.*

Vers. 6-9. *The law of Christian devotion.*—Our Lord's answer goes very deep into the whole subject of Christian consecration, both of self and of possessions. 1. He lays down first the great motive of it all—"she hath wrought a good work on Me." The absolute singleness of its reference to Him made it "good." The question is not, "To what purpose?" but "For whose sake?" Everything done from the impulse of simple love to Jesus Christ is "good." All other devotion of powers or possessions is "waste." 2. Christ next strips the cavil of its disguise, and shews its insincerity. The solicitude for the poor which had seized the objectors so suddenly would have ample opportunities to express itself. That "whensoever ye will" is a sharp prick to conscience, and is meant to disclose the insincerity of the care which is so occasional, though the misery which it affects to pity is so continual. True benevolence is not an intermittent fountain, but a perennial stream. 3. Farther, our Lord here

lays down the principle that circumstances may arise when our supreme love to Him not only warrants, but demands, the temporary neglect of perpetual and ordinary objects of liberality, in order to consecrate all our resources on some great act, which shall worthily express our love, and can only be done once. 4. "She hath done what she could." There our Lord lays down the measure of acceptable consecration. It is an apology or vindication of the form of the offering; but it is a stringent demand as to its amount. If Mary had had half a dozen more alabaster vases, which she kept unbroken, would she have been so praised? Capacity regulates obligation, both as to the manner and the measure. "Power to its last particle is duty." 5. We have next set forth the significance which our Lord puts into the service which He accepts. "She is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying." Love is wiser than it knows, and the purposes which Christ can make its offerings serve are higher and sacred than the offerer's intent. "Lord, when saw we Thee—and visited Thee?" We—did we do that? If we take care of the motive, which is our end of the deed, He will take care of the result, which is His end. 6. Finally, we have Christ's promise of perpetuity for the service which He accepts. If we lay our best in any kind at Christ's feet, He will take our poor offerings and melt them down to form part of His eternal crown.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 6. *God enriched by man's devotion.*—Can we, in reality, add anything to God? Can we ever experience the sweetness of doing something for Him who has done all things for us? Yes; Jehovah is not satisfied with governing men: He cannot rest until He possesses their heart. And that heart must not be captured: it can only be won over, and so bestowed. Thus the Creator becomes a suitor to His creatures; beseeches them to understand Him; is enriched by their

intelligence, impoverished by their dulness; is joyful in their affection, saddened at their refusal. And where is this better witnessed than at the supper table of Bethany?—*B. H. Alford.*

Ver. 7. *The problem of poverty, and how to deal with it.*—1. The essential claim which this class of mankind has upon the common brotherhood is not one of "charity," but is founded in religion; it is not a humane sentiment to be gratified, but a law of Christianity to be obeyed. 2. The poor may be considered in the light of Christ's legacy to His Church in all ages. If there were no poor claiming our sympathy and kindly ministry, what a lack there had been in the training of the Christian graces! 3. We are to perform this high and sacred duty in testimony of our love to Christ, and in gratitude for His love and services in our behalf.—*Homiletic Review.*

*The poor always with us.*—If we are wise, we shall be thankful for our own sakes that this is so. The mere sight of them may remind us that this world is not only or chiefly for the rich and prosperous, that "the poor will never cease out of the land," or even cease from forming the numerical majority of those who are to be sustained by it. The sufferings and distresses of the poor, and even their very follies and vices, may teach us a wholesome lesson, if we remember that they are men of like passions with ourselves, and that we possess our rational and moral nature in common with the most miserable and degraded of our species. But we shall derive little benefit from having the poor always with us unless we learn to consider them as partakers of the same spiritual privileges with ourselves, as fellow-members of the body of Christ—that body in which there is neither rich nor poor, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus. If we thus view our poorer brethren, we shall feel an interest in their welfare, both

temporal and eternal, which no other consideration can excite in us. We shall not be content with bestowing a pittance of relief upon a few cases of distress, or contributing our quota to a few charitable institutions. "Putting on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, long-suffering," we shall go forth, as ministering angels, into a world of sin and misery, carrying a healing balm wherever we go. We shall never turn away our face from any scene of distress, or our feet from the path which leads to it. We shall never refuse to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," or to "weep with them that weep." Thus soothing and relieving the sorrows of others, we shall forget our own; whispering comfort and hope to the wounded spirit of our brother, we shall lay up a rich store of peace and consolation within our own breast. We shall experience the truth of our Lord's saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; and we shall "know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Vers. 10, 11. *Greed in its demoniac greatness.*—1. A child of perfected unbelief as to Christ, God, and mankind. 2. A father of treachery, which has often injured the saints. 3. A companion of avarice, envy, anguish, audacity, despair.—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

Ver. 11. *The joy of the wicked is to have success in their crimes.* But what joy is this? It is the joy only of a moment, which will be changed into everlasting sorrow. It was easy for our Blessed Saviour to have broken this sacrilegious and, as it may be called, simoniacal bargain by diverting this opportunity, which depended on Himself; but it was necessary that sin should be instrumental in the destruction of sin, and that the Author of life should die to destroy death and his empire.—*P. Quesnel.*

**MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.**—*Verses 12—31.*

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxvi. 17-35; LUKE xxii. 7-38; JOHN xiii.-xvii.)

*The Christian Passover.*—It is a noteworthy fact that of the sacred times and seasons of the old economy we have nothing left but the Feast of the Passover. The perpetuation of that feast was provided for and announced in its original institution (Exod. xii. 14). On the night when Jesus was betrayed He ate the Passover with His disciples, and at the same time established the Holy Communion as its successor. He thus rescued the Passover feast from among the vanishing shadows of the ceremonial economy, and gave it in a simpler form but with unbroken continuity a perpetual place among the ordinances of the new dispensation.

**I. The original Passover feast was observed at night.**—It was the night of the 14th Nisan. King and people were asleep, unmindful of approaching danger. But the Hebrews were awake; lights glimmered in their homes. They had been forewarned that in their behalf the Lord was about to make bare His arm. The years of their oppression were at an end. Staff in hand they crossed the threshold, passed along the streets and out through the gates into the wilderness, then on through toil and danger and weariness to the land of which the Lord had said, "Behold, I will give it you." It was a darker night than that when our Lord hung dying on His Cross. At high noon the shadows closed around Him. Earth never saw so deep a darkness, nor was night ever pierced with a cry so dismal, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" His cry of abandonment was the signal of our deliverance. When His anguish had reached its utmost, we, healed by His stripes, passed forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

**II. The Passover feast was kept within-doors.**—This was true of no other of the great festivals. On other days the ties of kinship might be ignored, but on that day blood was always thicker than water. It was a time for praising the Lord because He hath set the solitary in families. The father presided; the children hearkened to his counsels and joined him in gratitude for the blessings of the roof-tree. The Holy Communion is our family feast. Here the Elder Brother takes our hands and places them in the strong grasp of the Infinite One, bidding us say after Him, "Abba, Father." We here commune with one another in the household of faith and with Him who is the God and Father of us all.

**III. The lamb was at the centre of the paschal feast.**—It must be a lamb of the first year and without blemish. The four days previous to the Passover were set apart for careful inspection. The lamb was placed in the hands of judicious persons, who were instructed to see that there should be no spot nor blemish in it. By a providential coincidence the four days previous to our Lord's crucifixion were days of peculiar trial. The eyes of many were upon Him to discover any possible spot or blemish. And when the preparation was over He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.

**IV. The blood of the paschal sacrifice was sprinkled on the door-posts and the lintel.** It was not enough that the lamb should have been slain. The head of the household must arrange for the sprinkling of the blood where the destroying angel might see it. For so it had been promised, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The Rabbis tell, in one of their sacred books, of a sick girl who on that memorable night was troubled with apprehension lest due precautions had not been taken. She called her father to her couch, saying, "Father, I



greatly fear lest the blood hath not been sprinkled on the lintels of the door. I pray thee, see to it." He laughed at her fears, but at her persistent entreaty he went and looked, and lo, his servant had neglected his task. The basin and the branch of hyssop were speedily brought, the blood was sprinkled, and the household saved. In like manner the merits of the Saviour's blood are effective only for such as appropriate it. Faith is the condition of life. Faith is the hyssop branch that sprinkles the lintels of the door. The night is dark, the black-winged angel is above us; but we are quite secure if we have entrusted our welfare to the only begotten Son of God.

**V. The lamb was eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.**—The bitter herbs were a reminder of the toil and weariness of Egypt. The unleavened bread was a symbol of the sinless life. The two together set forth the nature and necessity of repentance. For repentance is on the one side sorrow for sin, and on the other an abandonment of it. At the Holy Communion we remember with sorrow our Lord's passion for us and with joy His breaking of our bonds. In memory of His sacrifice we renew in this *sacramentum* our vows of devotion and signify our abhorrence of and departure from sin. Wherefore Paul enjoins upon us to purge out the old leaven (1 Cor. v. 7, 8).

**VI. The children of Israel ate their Passover with sandals on and staff in hand.**—They were ready for the signal of departure. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."—*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*

*The Holy Eucharist.*—It is part of the manifold wisdom of God that His gifts, in nature and in grace, minister to distinct and, as it often seems, unconnected ends, manifesting thereby the more His own unity as the secret cause and power of all things, putting itself forward in varied forms and divers manners, yet itself the one cause of all that is. The element which is the image of our baptism cleanses alike and refreshes, gives health and nourishment and growth. And if in nature, much more in the gifts of grace. For therein God, not by will or by power only, but by Himself and the effluence of His Spirit, is the life of all which lives through Him. It is, then, according to the analogy of His other gifts that His two great sacraments have in themselves manifold gifts. Baptism containeth not only remission of sin, actual or original, but maketh members of Christ, children of God, heirs of heaven, hath the seal and earnest of the Spirit, the germ of spiritual life; the Holy Eucharist imparteth not life only, spiritual strength, and oneness with Christ, and His indwelling, and participation of Him, but, in its degree, remission of sins also. As the manna is said to have "contented every man's delight and agreed to every taste," so He, the Heavenly Manna, becometh to every man what he needeth, and what he can receive; to the penitent perhaps chiefly remission of sins and continued life, to those who have "loved Him and kept His word" His own transporting, irradiating presence, full of His own grace and life and love; yet to each full contentment, because to each His own overflowing, undeserved goodness.

**I. The penitent's joy, then, in the Holy Eucharist is not the less deep because the pardon of sins is not, as in baptism, its direct provision.**—The chief object of the Holy Eucharist, as conveyed by type or prophecy, by the very elements chosen, or by the words of our Lord, is the support and enlargement of life, and that in Him. In type the tree of life was within the paradise of God, given as a nourishment of immortality, withheld from Adam when he sinned; the bread and wine wherewith Melchizedek met Abraham were to refresh the father of the faithful, the weary warrior of God: the paschal lamb was a commemorative sacrifice; the saving blood had been shed; it was to be eaten with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, and with bitter herbs, the type of mortification, and by those only who were undefiled. The manna was given

to them after they had passed the Red Sea, the image of cleansing baptism, and, as He Himself interprets it, represented Him as coming down from heaven to give life unto the world, the food of angels and the holy hosts of heaven; the shewbread was eaten only by those hallowed to the priesthood (as the whole Christian people has in this sense been made kings and priests), and, when once given to David and those that were with him, still on the ground that the "vessels of the young men were holy" (1 Sam. xxi. 5). In verbal prophecy it is foretold under the images of the very elements, and so of strengthening and overflowing joy. See Prov. ix. 5; Ps. xxii. 26, xxiii. 5, iv. 7, civ. 15; Isa. lv. 1; Cant. v. 1. In all these varied symbols—strength, renewed life, growth, refreshment, gladness, likeness to the angels, immortality—are the gifts set forth; they are gifts as to the redeemed of the Lord placed anew in the paradise of His Church, admitted to His sanctuary, joying in His presence, growing before Him, filled with the river of His joy, feasting with Him, yea Himself feasting in them, as in them He hungereth. Hitherto there is no allusion to sin; it is what the Church should be, walking in the brightness of His light, and itself reflecting that brightness. And when our Lord most largely and directly is setting forth the fruits of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He speaks throughout of one gift—life; freedom from death, life through Him, through His indwelling, and therefore resurrection from the dead and life eternal. See John vi. 50, 51, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58. No one can observe how this whole discourse circleth round this gift of life, and how our Lord, with unwearied patience, bringeth this one truth before us in so many different forms, without feeling that He means to inculcate, that life in Him is His chief gift in His Sacrament, and to make a reverent longing for it an incentive to our faith. Yet although life in Him is the substance of His whole teaching, the teaching itself is manifold. Our Lord inculcates not one truth only in varied forms, but in its different bearings. He answers not the strivings of the Jews, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Such an "How can these things be?" He never answereth; and we, if we are wise, shall never ask how they can be elements of this world and yet His very body and blood. But how they give life to us He does answer; and amid this apparent uniformity of His teaching each separate sentence gives us a portion of that answer. And the teaching of the whole, as far as such as we may grasp it, is this: That He is the living bread because He came down from heaven, and as being one God with the Father hath life in Himself, even as the Father hath life in Himself; the life then which He is He imparted to that flesh which He took into Himself, yea, which He took so wholly that Holy Scripture says He became it, "the Word became flesh," and since it is thus a part of Himself, "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood" (He Himself says the amazing words), "eateth Me," and so receiveth into Himself, in an ineffable manner, his Lord Himself, "dwelleth" (our Lord says) "in Me, and I in Him," and having Christ within him, not only *shall he have*, but he "*hath*" already "eternal life," because he hath Him who is "the only true God and eternal life"; and so Christ "will raise him up at the last day," because he hath His life in him. Receiving Him into this very body, they who are his receive life, which shall pass over to our very decaying flesh; they have within them Him who is life and immortality and incorruption, to cast out or absorb into itself our natural mortality and death and corruption, and "shall live for ever," because made one with Him who alone "liveth for evermore." But where, one may feel, is there here any place for the sinner? Here all breathes of holy life, life in God, the life of God imparted to man, the indwelling of the All-holy and Incarnate Word, the presence of God in the soul and body, incorruption and eternal life, through His holy presence and union with Him who, being God, is life. Yet although most which is spoken belongs

to Christians, as belonging already to the household of saints and the family of heaven and the communion of angels and unity with God, still, here as elsewhere in the New Testament, there is a subordinate and subdued notion of sin; and what wraps the saint already in the third heaven may yet uphold us sinners, that the pit shut not her mouth upon us. The same reality of the Divine gift makes it angels' food to the saint, the ransom to the sinner. And both because it is the body and blood of Christ. To him its special joy is that it is his Redeemer's very broken body, it is His blood, which was shed for the remission of his sins. In the words of the ancient Church, he "drinks his ransom," he eateth that, "the very body and blood of the Lord, the only sacrifice for sin," God "poureth out" for him yet "the most precious blood of His Only-Begotten"; they "are fed from the Cross of the Lord, because they eat His body and blood"; and as of the Jews of old, even those who had been the betrayers and murderers of their Lord, it was said, "The blood, which in their frenzy they shed, believing they drank," so of the true penitent it may be said, whatever may have been his sins, so he could repent, awful as it is to say, the blood he indeed despised, and profaned, and trampled underfoot, may he, when himself humbled in the dust, drink, and therein drink his salvation.

II. In each place in Holy Scripture where the doctrine of the Eucharist is taught, there is at least some indication of the remission of sins.—Our Lord, while chiefly speaking of Himself, as the bread of life, the true meat, the true drink, His indwelling, resurrection from the dead, and life everlasting, still says also, "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." As amid the apparent identity of this teaching each separate oracle enounces some fresh portion of the whole truth, so also does this; that His flesh and blood in the Sacrament shall give life, not only because they are the flesh and blood of the Incarnate Word, who is life, but also because they are the very flesh and blood which were given and shed for the life of the world, and are given to those *for* whom they had been given. This is said yet more distinctly in the awful words whereby He consecrated for ever elements of this world to be His body and blood. "This is My body, which *is* given for you"; "This is My body, which *is* broken for you"; "This is My blood of the new testament, which *is* shed for many for the remission of sins"; "This cup is the new testament in My blood, which *is* shed for you." He saith not, "which shall be given," "shall be broken," "shall be shed," but "is being given," "being broken," "being shed" (*διδόμενον, κλάμενον, ἐκχυνόμενον*), and this in remarkable contrast with His own words, when speaking of that same gift, as yet future, "The bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give [*ὅτι ἐγὼ δώσω*] for the life of the world." And of one of the words used St. Chrysostom remarks how it could not be said of the Cross, but is true of the Holy Eucharist. "For 'a bone of Him,' it saith, 'shall not be broken.' But that which He suffered not on the Cross, this He suffers in the oblation for thy sake, and submits to be broken that He may fill all men." Hereby He seems as well to teach us that the great act of His passion then began; then, as a Priest, did He through the Eternal Spirit offer Himself without spot to God; then did He "consecrate" Himself, before He was by wicked hands crucified and slain; and all which followed, until He commended His Blessed Spirit to the hands of His Heavenly Father, was one protracted, willing suffering. Then did He begin His lonely journey, where there was none to help or uphold, but He "travelled in the greatness of His strength"; then did He begin to "tread the winepress alone," and to "stain all His raiment"; then to "wash the garments" of His humanity "with" the "wine" of His blood; and therefore does the blood bedew us too; it cleanses us, because it is the blood shed for the remission of our sins. There is, accordingly, an entire agreement in the Eucharistic liturgies of the universal



Church, in prayer, in benediction, in declaration, confessing that in the Holy Eucharist there is forgiveness of sins also. Those of St James and St. Mark so paraphrase the words of consecration as to develop the sense that they relate not only to the past act of His precious bloodshedding on the Cross, but to the communication of that blood to us now. "This is My body, which for you is broken and given for the remission of sins." "This is My blood of the New Testament, which for you and for many is poured out and given for the remission of sins." Again, the liturgies join together, manifoldly, remission of sins and life eternal, as the two great fruits of this Sacrament. Thus in the prayer for the descent of the Holy Ghost on the sacred elements, "that they may be to all who partake of them to the remission of sins, and to life eternal"; or in intercession, "that we may become meet to be partakers of Thy holy mysteries to the remission of sins and life eternal"; or in the words of communicating, "I give thee the precious and holy and undefiled body of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and life eternal."

III. Since, then, this Divine Sacrament has, as its immediate and proper end, union with Him who hath taken our manhood into God, and the infusion into us of His Spirit and life and immortality, making us one with His glorified humanity, as He is one in the Godhead with the Father, and, besides this, it is ulteriorly the cleansing of our sins, the refining our corruptions, the repairing of our decays, **what must be the loss of the Church of the latter days, in which Communion are so infrequent!** How can we wonder that love should have waxed cold, corruptions so abound, grievous falls have been among our youth almost the rule, to stand upright the exception, heathen strictness reproach Christian laxity, the Divine life become so rare, all higher instances of it so few and faint, when "the stay and the staff," the strength of that life is willingly forfeited! How should there be the fulness of the Divine life, amid all but a month-long fast from our "daily bread"! It implies a life so different from this our commonplace ordinary tenor, a life so above this world as knit with Him who hath overcome the world, so angelic as living on Him who is angels' food; an union with God so close, that we cannot mostly, I suppose, imagine to ourselves how we could daily thus be in heaven, and in our daily business here below—how sanctify our daily duties, thoughts, refreshment, so that they should be tinged with the hues reflected by our daily heaven, not that heavenly gift be dimmed with our earthliness—how our souls should through the day shine with the glory of that ineffable Presence to which we had approached, not we approach to it with earth-dimmed souls. It must ever be so; we cannot know the gift of God if we forfeit it; we must cease mostly even to long for what we forego. We lose the very sense to understand it.

IV. But, however we may see that our present decay and negligence should not continue, restoration must not be rashly compassed.—Sound restoration must be the gift of God, to be sought of Him in humiliation, in prayer, in mutual forbearance and charity, with increased strictness of life and more diligent use of what we have. He who alone can make more frequent Communion a blessing, and who gave such strength to that one heavenly meal, whereby through forty days and forty nights of pilgrimage He carried Elijah to His presence at the Mount of God, can, if we be faithful and keep His gift which we receive, give such abundant strength to our rarer Communion, that they shall carry us through our forty years of trial unto His own Holy Hill, and the vision of Himself in bliss. Let us each suspect ourselves, not others; the backward their own backwardness, the forward their own eagerness; each habitually interpret well the other's actions and motives; so, while we each think all good of the other, may we all together, strengthened by the same bread, washed by the same blood, be led, in the unity of the Spirit and the bond

of peace and holiness of life, to that ineffable feast, where not, as now, in mysteries, but, face to face, we shall ever see God, and be ever filled with His goodness and His love.—*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*

*The feelings suited to our last Sacrament.*—The last words of a man of God, at the close of a religious solemnity, are regarded with peculiar attention. The parting warnings, counsels, and encouragements of such a man have counteracted the influence of temptations to folly, kept the mind steadfast in seasons of difficulty, excited to the most arduous duties, and reconciled the heart to the most painful separations. Our text presents to us the last words of the Lord Jesus at the observance of the Holy Communion—words rich in admonition and in comfort—words which have melted many a heart in pious affection, and inspired many a fearful soul with the most blessed hopes.

**I. Consider these words as an intimation of our Lord's speedy departure, and of the termination of all the present intercourse of His disciples with Him.**

1. Our Blessed Saviour made frequent references to His death during the course of His life. To reconcile His disciples to an event so necessary, He expatiates on its blessed results, and generally connects with it consequences of the most happy description both to Himself and to them. 2. The intercourse of our Lord with His disciples had been of the most affectionate kind. But that intercourse was now to close; from the circle of love and peace in which He now sat He was about to be removed into the assembly of the wicked, and to suffer all the ignominy and pain which their unrestrained malice could inflict. 3. Mark with what mild resignation our Lord contemplates this event. What was dear to Him in life He willingly sacrificed; what was painful in death He cheerfully bore. 4. Our Lord's language intimates the necessity of His dying to His mediatorial glory and to the future happiness of His people. 5. Our Lord, in contemplating this as His last participation of the Holy Sacrament with them, may be viewed as anticipating the close of all that worship which was suited to His state of humiliation and suffering.

**II. Consider the intimation our Lord gives of a reunion.**—There are two considerations which stamp a peculiar beauty on this assurance. The termination of His intercourse with them was to be closed in a manner no way creditable to their attachment or their courage. His generous heart could forgive their weakness and cowardice, and friends and foes were the objects of a charity which was stronger than death. I may add that this promise of reunion, following so immediately the notice of His separation, shews, in a most affecting manner, how unwilling He is that His people should mourn in hopeless grief, and how ready He is to solace and to encourage. It has been much disputed to what place or scene our Lord refers as that of reunion with His disciples. Some have supposed that it refers to His renewed intercourse with them after His resurrection; and in this view it intimated to them that the death of their Master, to which they looked forward with so much terror, would only be a temporary subjection to the last enemy, and that He would rise in heart unchanged, with the same delight in their society and the same solicitude for their welfare as ever. But as it appears to me that our Lord meant to suggest the fullest consolation, it seems better not to limit the passage to an intercourse with them on earth, which was to lie in a few meetings during the space of forty days, but to consider it as pointing to the communion of the world of glory. 1. Considering it as referring to the heavenly state, this promise suggests that the reunion of the disciples with their Lord is certain. Men have often spoken of meeting their friends in heaven when parting with them in death; but they speak of a place whose gates they have no power to open, whose bliss they have no power to allot. It is in

many cases the language of ignorance and presumption, which reason will not sanction, which conscience condemns; but the Speaker in the text is the way, the truth, and the life. Every heart is in His hands, every lot is in His sentence, every region is in His power, and all futurity is in His eye. 2. It intimates that this reunion should be in the most glorious place, even in the kingdom of His Father. It will take place in a scene where naught can occur either to embitter or to terminate it. In that kingdom the highest honours were destined for Himself; but to them, poor and despised as they now were, He would grant to share in His dignity, and to rejoice in His joy. His love deemed no abasement too low for Himself, and no exaltation too high for them. 3. It suggests that, when thus reunited, their intercourse should be most intimate and affectionate. In His intercourse with them here Judas mingled, though he had probably gone out before the institution of the Holy Communion; but in heaven there should not be one whose heart was not sincere in friendship, nor one whose presence should in the least check the freest disclosure of the Redeemer's feelings. Here too the idea of the termination of this intercourse afflicted the disciples; but in heaven they should reign in life, never see their Saviour's countenance less complacent, nor behold the last enemy but in his final destruction. 4. It intimates that in this reunion they should enjoy together the purest and most blissful delights. (1) They shall enjoy these delights with the Saviour. His presence shall heighten the beauty of paradise, and render more delicious all that proceeds from its living fountains. In all the tokens of their Father's complacency He shall share, and in all their attainments in excellence He shall be the pattern. (2) The enjoyments of the heavenly state shall be the same in kind with those of the sanctuary on earth, however they may differ in degree. They are excited by the same objects and directed by the same spirit. (3) These enjoyments in heaven shall, like the Holy Communion on earth, bear a direct reference to the Cross. Every feeling of rapture will attest its efficacy, every song of the redeemed celebrate its glory. (4) Their reunion with one another is intimated in this assurance.

**III. Consider these words as a memento intended for every observance of the Holy Communion.**—At one Sacrament or another these words will be addressed to every pious communicant, and sooner probably to the most vigorous and healthy than he is aware; for “we are strangers before God, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.” It would be proper that all of us should consider our situation in this light; for none can promise himself another solemnity of this nature, and none will improve this ordinance properly who does not observe it as his last Sacrament. 1. It should be received with resignation. (1) It is made by Him who hath the power of life and death, and whose will it is both impious and vain to resist. (2) The kindness of the manner in which He intimates this is another reason for resignation. It is with the voice of invitation and persuasion that He addresses you, rather than with that of authority. (3) You cannot, in this scene, mark the resignation of your Lord to His Father's will, nor hear Him saying, “The cup which My Father giveth Me, shall I not drink it?” and be disposed to rebel against the determination of His providence. 2. It should be received with gratitude. It shews His goodness to you that He apprises you of this event, that you may use all the appointed means of preparation for it. He wishes to save you from the anxiety and horror of those who shall be awakened from the sleep of security by the notice of His approach. 3. It should be received with love. Here we see Christ submitting to death to redeem us from destruction, laying open to us the kindness of His heart, revealing the everlasting felicity for which He hath destined us, and solacing Himself in the prospect of being happy with us



for ever. That heart must be lost to all proper feeling which is not kindled into affection by this statement of the Saviour. It ought to be heard with increasing affection to our Christian brethren. Aged persons have been sometimes charged with implacability of temper, with brooding over the injuries of former times, and instilling their prejudices and animosities into their descendants; but let your conduct shew that you have fully imbibed the forgiving spirit of the Cross, and that every malignant feeling is extinguished within you. 4. It should be received with a determination to shew increasing diligence in preparing for our departure. Nolder objects solicit your affections; let them now engage your whole heart. 5. It should be received with hope of the felicity here promised. This is the promise of Him who is the faithful witness, and, while such love breathes in it, you cannot question His intention to fulfil it.—*H. Belfrage, D.D.*

Ver. 26. *The Hallel, and Jesus singing.*—The best scholarship warrants us to assume that as Psalms cxiii.-cxviii. formed the Hallel or hallelujah songs of praise associated with the Passover, so the closing hymn sung by Jesus and His disciples was Psalm cxviii., as being that which rounded off the partaking of the fourth festal cup ("the cup of salvation").

I. Psalm cxviii. opens with a burst of hallelujahs over the mercy of God.—The sum of these hallelujahs is, "O praise God for His mercies of old and now." It is easy to understand how at that moment thoughts of the mercy of God would gird the Redeemer as with new strength to go forward to His appointed work. That work was to lay open the channel along which the mercy of God should flow "in righteousness" toward our fallen race. So that we cannot help feeling that it was Divinely ordered that this jubilant refrain should come in as part of the Lord's last singing on earth. You remember how similarly this was the keynote of the dedication of the first Temple: "He is good; His *mercy* endureth for ever." And so throughout. The great heart of the world—as of a sick, weary giant—ached for the ultimate manifestation of this mercy; and it could not but bring to the Lord a strange and awful joy that now at long, long last the manifestation was about to be made. I covet for myself and you all deeper insight into the wonder and grace, benediction and righteousness, of God's ever-enduring and unchanging mercy in Christ Jesus. Grasping it, how may we dare to go to the guiltiest, even vilest, and whisper, "God loves you." Behold the proof in the Cross, in the Crucified!

II. The suitability to the Lord's circumstances and to the continuous dangers of His Church (vers. 5-13).—It was the hour and power of darkness. Personally the shadow of Gethsemane was already blackening over His path. There lay before Him the betrayal—the arrest—the forsaking—the denial—the arraignment—the judgment—the suborned witnesses—the insults—the mockery—the loathsome spitting—the blows—the scourging—the condemnation—and, beyond, the spectre and spectacle of the ghastly cross. Is it not, then, affecting and yet again sustaining to find here written beforehand, in this last psalm of the Hallel, great words of strength and cheer (vers. 5, 6): "Out of my distress"—plumbless, measureless distress—"I called upon the Lord: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear what *man* can do unto me." We can again conceive the Lord flinging Himself on the vast breadth of these exultant words. Amid all dangers and tribulation the Church, like her Divine Head, may well find in this portion of the final Hallel psalm inexhaustible consolation. Martin Luther in the three—of the Reformation and of his own peril, and when even Catherine de Bora seemed to counsel retreat and compliance, turned to this psalm and "waxed valiant" as he sang (ver. 17), "I shall not die, but live, and declare

the works of the Lord." Let us not fear. The waves of the tempest-trampled sea may toss to and fro and make a mighty noise, but the blue heavens beyond the clouds are calm. God lives. God reigns. The once pale hand grasps the sceptre of the universe, and sways ebb and flow of event and circumstance to His "everlasting purpose."

III. **The joy set before the Redeemer and before us through Him** (vers. 14-21).—Joy is the sublimation of sorrow. Sorrow opens the door for joy to come in. Sorrow and joy are strangely akin, or, as we say in Scotland and old English, "sib." Sorrow turns into joy—not merely is followed by joy, but turns into it. So was it with the disciples. "Your sorrow shall be *turned* into joy"—the very event that seemed so black and calamitous becoming the centre and source of everlasting light. Some of you, doubtless, have seen Doré's great picture of "Pilate's Wife's Dream." Those of you who have seen it will remember that whilst the horrid cross in the foreground looms up large and hideous, yet away in the radiant distance that same cross is shewn transformed and glorified, and glorifying all that it shines upon. So if sorrow is deep, I think it leads to and issues in something deeper still, and that is joy. Hence in the Epistle to the Hebrews, by one of those deep glances into the heart of the mystery of things that make this letter so great, we have all this summed up (xii. 2). Be it yours and mine, like our Lord, to rest on this Hallel psalm and see all around us demonstration, that the Lord's mighty prayer was no idle breath like "idle tears": "These things I spake in the world, that they may have *My joy* fulfilled in themselves" (John xvii. 13).

IV. **The great Messianic symbol** (vers. 22, 23).—As we turn and return on the favourite texts of Jesus, it moves and melts us to discover how they nearly all revolve around His redemptive work. The present is no exception. For we all carry in our heart of hearts the "exceeding great and precious promises" and teaching that set forth the Lord Christ as a "stone." Even the glazing eye of dying Jacob beheld it (Gen. xlix. 24). And so Isaiah sang (xxviii. 16). It is therefore just what might have been expected, that earlier the Lord turned to those very words now before us, and uttered from them some of His most barbed and searching words to rejecting Israel. And as we to-day think of the supernatural structure—part on earth and part in heaven—that along the nineteen centuries has been raised on this one Stone, do we not thrill to the song of Christ's last singing, and exclaim, "This is from the Lord: it is marvellous in our eyes."

V. Finally, in vers. 25-29, we have **thanksgiving**. I can but accentuate ver. 27: "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Once more to the vision of faith this sacrifice has been set forth—once more it has been our privilege by the memorial symbols appointed to remember the Lord's death "until He come." And so as thus again we behold "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," thanksgiving may fitly close our service as thanksgiving closed His, as perchance flatteringly He sang for the last time the Hallel of His own sacrificial death: "He filleth our mouths with songs." In our outlook I see no call for despondency, I discern no omens of failure—I catch a light of glory on the mountain-tops that is descending to the plains, and is making the Cross still more refulgent, and rallying more and more myriads of tired feet and wearier hearts to the great broken heart. Yea, I see our blood-ransomed world girdled by mightier rings than Saturn's, swung back into its primal orbit of unsullied light; and by-and-by we shall hear reverberating from sea to sea and from shore to shore (Rev. xi. 15).—*A. B. Grosart, D.D.*

Vers. 27-31. *Man's need of Divine support*.—We are taught by our holy

religion that man's ability to perform the appointed duties of his Christian calling is derived from the co-operation and assistance of the Holy Spirit, which must be sought by humble and fervent prayer. Some, however, have entertained doubts on the subject, in consequence of their inability to discriminate between the natural movements of their minds and the influences of Divine agency, forgetting that we are required not to give account of the nature or extent of the assistance vouchsafed from above, but only to receive it thankfully and to use it diligently. Others have questioned the existence of such spiritual aid, because not conscious of their own need of it. To them this discourse is addressed.

**I. The circumstances connected with the fall of St. Peter.**—1. If ever an unassisted mortal might have been expected to stand by his own strength, it was Peter—the Rock-man. The instructions he had received, the miracles he had witnessed, the variety of motives with which his intercourse with Christ must have supplied him, might have been considered almost as an equivalent for inspiration. Yet he fell. Betrayed by ignorance of his own heart and presumptuous confidence in his own resolution, he caused himself to be recorded for an everlasting memorial of human weakness and frailty. 2. The Master, as the time of His betrayal approached, with a view doubtless of consoling His disciples under their coming disgrace, gave them a previous intimation of it in the kindest and most soothing terms (vers. 27, 28). The effect of this announcement upon the others is not recorded. Perhaps conscious of their own weakness, they remained silent; or perhaps, while inwardly trusting that they would be found ready for any emergency, they did not presume to express that confidence. Peter alone ventured to proclaim his imaginary fortitude (ver. 29). Christ thereupon revealed a lower depth even than desertion to which Peter would descend (ver. 30). Such seeming distrust of the sincerity of his attachment drew from the warm-hearted disciple a vehement protest (ver. 31). But in the hour of trial, how did he behave? Whence that equivocating answer, conveying falsehood under its most subtle guise (ver. 68)? Whence that second denial (ver. 70)? Whence that cursing and swearing with which the third accusation induced him to accompany the repetition of his assertion (ver. 71)? Alas! human nature must bear the shame of these reiterated falsehoods and blasphemies. Though selected for the apostleship, Peter yet remained dependent only on mortal resources, and in the hour of trial they proved utterly inadequate.

**II. The admonition to be derived from St. Peter's sad fall.**—1. Is there to be found a man who, in face of such an example, dares to refuse the proffered aid of the Holy Spirit, and to encounter life's conflict in his own unaided strength? Let him attend to an exposition of the delusion under which he labours. (1) Such a man may have persuaded himself that his reliance on his own strength is not the effect of presumption, but only of a fervent wish and sincere resolution to tread the path of holiness. But such we know was equally the disposition of Peter's mind. On his first introduction to our notice we are even struck with his exceeding humility and self-abasement (Luke v. 8); and the same meek and modest distrust of himself is again evinced only a few hours before his fall (John xiii. 6-9). (2) The self-confident man may imagine that there was a perverseness in the character of Peter from which he is himself free. But the Gospel history lends no countenance to such a theory. On more than one occasion the extreme openness and warmth of his disposition led Peter to so unreserved a discovery of the opinions and prejudices of his heart as exposed him to sharp reproof (Matt. xvi. 23; John xviii. 11). Yet we find that he was ever submissive to the correction and ever obedient to the direction of his Master. (3) A man may flatter himself that he possesses a



firmness, an energy, and a zeal which were wanting in Peter. But what reason has he for thinking so? He surely must have had no inconsiderable degree of firmness who merited and received from Christ the name "Cephas"; and he certainly could not be accused of want of energy and zeal who, when his Lord was arrested, instantly drew sword in His defence, and wielded it so effectually as to incur the displeasure of Him for whom he fought! 2. How, then, came Peter's resolution to miscarry in the scene of his Master's dire extremity? The reason seems to be this: he had grounded the execution of that resolution upon a sudden feeling of immoderate self-confidence,—nothing doubting but his will was in his own power, whether God's grace assisted him or not; fully satisfied that what he had courage to resolve so honestly he had likewise ability to perform. He had not sufficiently considered that He who forewarned him of the failure of his resolution was the Searcher of hearts, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man—and what was not. Had he only reflected on the Master's own declaration, "Without Me ye can do nothing," the empty boast would have died away upon his lips, and given place to a humble petition for Divine assistance.

III. *The need of prayer to ensure preservation from a like fall.*—In contemplating the failure of a man who seems to have possessed all the elements of moral strength, and all the qualities requisite for a life of consistent integrity and undeviating holiness, are we not irresistibly led to the conclusion that our natural powers are insufficient for the work which we have to do, and that consequently an appeal must be made to heaven for grace to help in time of need? If we reach this conclusion by a comparison of ourselves with St. Peter in those faculties which we may be supposed to possess in common with him, must not the conviction of our insufficiency be increased tenfold, when we reflect that he must have had many opportunities and incentives to perseverance which we naturally cannot have? Yet he fell! His familiar association with Christ—hearing His words, witnessing His actions, and consequently receiving continual accessions of information and continual confirmations of his faith—must necessarily have enlarged his understanding and strengthened his judgment. Yet he fell! Who, then, at the distance at which we are placed by nature from intercourse with Christ, can possibly hope to stand alone? Who that sees an apostle vanquished will dare to go forth to the battle of life unaided by that Divine Spirit "without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy"?

Vers. 29-31. *How best to promote the accomplishment of our good resolutions.*—Perhaps it is not taking for granted too much to suppose that few Christians have come to a due conviction of their own sinful weakness and infirmity of purpose without having themselves so fallen under some trying occasion or temptation as afterwards to bewail from the heart their own irresolution, and, like Peter, to go out and weep bitterly. For however strong the mind, however sound the faith, and however fixed and confirmed by habit the religious principles, there are occasions when the Christian's armour seems to stand him in little stead. He appears taken by surprise,—either his situation is new to him, or the allurement unusually great, or the opportunity too auspicious, or the alternative attended by great dangers, or the advantage of compliance sure and important, or the favourable concurrence of circumstances not likely to occur again. One or other or even all of these considerations perhaps prompts him to decide quickly; and, alas! to determine wrongly. He falls, therefore, because he never contemplated such a trial of his strength; or having contemplated it, thought himself quite safe. But how, it may be asked, is such success to our best purposes and resolves to be secured, that we may be, as

much as possible, prepared for every temptation—that we may, as far as human infirmity will permit, prevent “sin from getting dominion over us”—that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, “to stand”?

I. To give stability to our good resolutions we must be convinced of our own weakness as well as wickedness. No man can be ignorant of his besetting sin—his peculiar bias towards some one vice, temper, or failing; and whatever it may be, to that he should principally direct his attention in forming his resolves. For without having made this part of his moral nature his especial study, without understanding clearly what little reliance he can place upon himself, in the case of allurements and temptation addressed to this his prevailing sin, his most delicate purpose will avail him nothing. He will seek occasions and places and persons from which he never yet escaped without guilt, and thus perhaps continue to impute to circumstances the fault which belongs only to his own heart.

II. We must have minutely considered our former lapses and relapses before we presume to make a resolve. The causes of our fall should be accurately ascertained, and the leading incitement to each relapse be singled out and set up as a kind of beacon to warn us effectually where our danger lies. The repeated practice of sin has made this admonition by no means difficult for the sinner to obey. For he has only to select any one transgression, and he will for the most part trace in it the usual course of his progress in the commission of sin. Above all, he will perceive that with each relapse his resolves have become less efficacious, the path to his favourite vice has become smoother, his compunctions less bitter, his heart more hardened.

III. The sense of your weakness and of your frequent relapses should induce such a distrust of your own strength as to deter you from exposing yourselves to trials which may be avoided. It is easy to attribute to yourselves powers of resistance or forbearance and self-denial which are far beyond your present attainments in Christian discipline. Your resolves should therefore be made in all humility. Nothing too high and hard for your present strength should be attempted. We are all to expect trials; but it is a criminal degree of rashness to go out needlessly to meet them, and much more so when a little reflexion might teach us that we have not arms sufficiently strong for the encounter.

IV. There must be after every lapse an act of sincere and sorrowful repentance before we presume to make a fresh resolve. Where there have been shame and confusion, and remorse and fear, there may be some promise of our “taking heed to our ways,” of our hating sin, of our “recovering ourselves out of the snare of the devil.” But when the sinner, in order to pacify at the moment the fearful misgivings that ever attend guilt, satisfies himself with the bare resolution to offend no more, what grounds can he have for accepting so insignificant a pledge of his own actual improvement?

V. Even after repentance we must not consider our resolves as any warrant of our safety without two other safeguards. 1. The first of these is vigilance. Our minds must be thoroughly imbued with that important truth that ours is a life of warfare—that we are, as it were, in an enemy’s country. Our own corruption within and constant temptations without should keep us ever in the state of sentinels. For the greatest security for the sinner, after all, is to avoid every occasion of sin—to be beforehand in shunning the dangerous opportunity, the depraved associate, the convenient hour, the favourable situation. 2. The other principal safeguard to our resolves is prayer. We have only to be earnest and sincere in our applications to the throne of grace for spiritual aid, through the intercession of that Redeemer who is “able to save them to the uttermost

that come unto God through Him," and we shall not fail to receive the blessing that we ask.

VI. Among the religious offices which come in aid of the means above recommended, none is more efficacious than the "spiritual food and sustenance" properly received in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.—On no occasion does the heart of man come into closer intercourse with his God and Saviour; on no occasion does he draw more freely from the fountain of Divine grace. For he not only receives remission of his sins, and peace and comfort past all understanding, but he is endued with new vigour for his conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and all his holy purposes and resolutions receive the sanction and support of his approving Maker. Thus renewed in the inner man, he cometh forth from that holy ordinance as "a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course."—*A. B. Evans, D.D.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 12-16. *Christ's preparation for the Passover.*—Not even Peter and John are to know beforehand the man's name and address, lest, if Judas should suspect them of knowing, he should worm, or try to worm, the secret out of them. Perhaps he did suspect—perhaps he did try to get at their secret; but even Peter could not tell him what he did not know. In His love and pity, His love for them, His pity for Judas—to save *them* from a mistake they would have found it hard to forgive, and to hold *him* back from a sin which man has not forgiven yet, though we have no right to assume that Christ has not forgiven it long ago—He rendered it impossible for them to betray Him to Judas, and for Judas to betray Him to the priests. The incident, thus viewed, has many lessons for us. 1. Even when He seems most unlike Himself our Lord is most truly Himself, and is leading us where we would be, though by ways we know not, and which do not seem likely to lead us there. 2. His presence extends to the minutest details as well as to the main lines and critical occasions of life: nothing which really concerns us is overlooked or forgotten by Him; no, not even the pitcher, or the cup of cold water we need to slake our thirst, or are carrying to a neighbour who needs it even more than we do. 3. If we love Him, and are bent on serving Him, He will save us from

those innocent, because unconscious and unintentional, transgressions of His goodwill for us which must inevitably inflict their natural punishment upon us, however guiltless we may be—just as He saved Peter and John from innocently betraying a secret to Judas of which he would have made an evil use. 4. Even when we are traitors to Him in our hearts, when we are meditating some sin which will cast us from His grace, He will do all He can, short of forcing our will, to save us from our sin; He will place hindrances and impediments in *our* way as He did in the way of Iscariot, and will not abandon us to our evil hearts, until, against all the remonstrances and warnings of His love, we overleap all hindrances and plunge into what we know to be a path of death.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

Ver. 14. *Preparation for Christ as our guest.*—At all seasons of the year, and on festivals and ordinary days alike, the question, which is at once a warning and an invitation, is addressed to each one of us, "Where is My guest-chamber?" And we, far more than the owner of that honoured house in Jerusalem, have had opportunities of knowing all that that question means. It is no guest-chamber built with hands that He needs, but the temple built without hands, which temple we are. If that hospitable disciple would



do so much for His entertainment during a few hours, surely we may do as much when we aim at having Him for our guest for ever—throughout life and in eternity. 1. It must be an *upper* room, in the highest part of our being, the best that we have to offer to any one. It must be in our heart of hearts, where we can love Him, not in word and tongue, but in deed and truth, with all our soul and all our strength. There are those who think that they have done much if they have given Him a welcome in some transitory emotion of religious excitement. But these heated feelings are not the upper room, which is ever calm and quiet; they are more akin to the common hall, where noise and excitement are frequent. 2. It must be a *furnished* room and *ready*: furnished with those things which He loves, and which will enable Him to rest and abide—prayers and hymns, thanksgivings and intercessions, holy thoughts, kind words, and good deeds. “Alms all around and hymns within”—that is the atmosphere in which Christ can abide; and the heart that is furnished with these can offer Him a home in which He may bestow His goods. For Christ is no man’s debtor. If He comes as a guest He comes open-handed, and bestows blessings without measure or stint. 3. And therefore we must prepare a *large* room. As we are niggardly in what we offer to Him, so also we are half hearted and little-minded in what we ask from Him. We do not desire His graces enough, and we do not desire enough of them. We must open our hearts freely to receive the good measure, pressed down and shaken together, which He yearns to bestow. It is His own command, His own promise, which says, “Open thy mouth *wide*, and I will *fill* it.”—*A. Plummer, D.D.*

Vers. 17-19. *A traitor among the twelve*.—1. In the holiest society on earth the unholy may have a place. 2. The highest goodness may fail to win to the obedience of faith. 3. There

may be moral wrong without present consciousness. 4. The knowledge and appointment of God do not hinder the freedom and responsibility of man.—*J. H. Godwin.*

*The traitor*.—1. At first it seems strange to find a traitor amongst the select disciples of Christ. Yet there is nothing in this selection of a bad man to be an agent in carrying on a good design which is not in harmony with the general scheme of the Divine government. It is a condition of the visible Church that “the evil should be ever mingled with the good,” and that sometimes the evil should have authority and pre-eminence over the good. Thus the small circle of Christ’s select disciples presented a sort of epitome of the world into which they were to be sent and the Church over which they were to preside. 2. The next thing which challenges observation here is the unfruitfulness of this unhappy man under the extraordinary religious advantages which he enjoyed. We plainly see, in this instance, that mere means of grace, unaccompanied by an actual operation of Divine power upon the heart, are nothing. Even the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, then for the first and last time administered by Christ Himself, and of which Judas was permitted to partake, as the type of all who should thereafter profane those holy mysteries, had no effect upon him, except to make him worse than before (John xiii. 27). 3. The commonness of the sinful lust by which Judas was enticed. What is there singular in a man’s rejoicing because his wealth is great, or desiring that it may be still greater? This is, in fact, the ruling passion of mankind. The desire of acquiring is one of the most powerful springs of human conduct. Rightly directed and strictly regulated, it is not only innocent, but laudable. Unregulated and misdirected, see what it leads to!—*F. Field, LL.D.*

Ver. 18. *A question of propriety as to quality and time of news*.—Christ

then breaks news at table that operates distressfully. He knew it would. That was a violation of hygienic law. At such times, to secure the best results, cheerfulness should reign. He who made the Sabbath for man would surely not thoughtlessly or wantonly establish a precedent the observance of which would be against man. It cannot be. The gospel tends to gladness. Its trend makes for the good of man as man, body and soul, in all the phases of his being. But there is a disturbing element in him. The otherwise beautiful equipoise, adjustment, and beneficent operation of the laws of human life have been rudely shattered by sin. Anarchical times demand different treatment from the "piping times of peace." Just when and where the province of one law should be invaded in deference to another and higher were questions which the Saviour, we may be sure, in His own case settled righteously. That He had good reason therefore we may rest assured. But what that was we may not be so sure. Possibly the "needs be" was this: His hour was at hand. The goal was being reached without the unnecessary introduction of the miraculous either in forcing or retarding. God does not work by miracles when ordinary means will suffice. Were Christ to utter these words sooner, Judas might, humanly speaking, have perfected arrangements and precipitated matters. Jesus would then have been betrayed before "His time," unless a miracle of prevention were wrought. Had He spoken them later, Judas might not have the requisite time to compass his plans and be on the ground at the right moment for "his hour," unless a miracle of hastening were wrought. And then, again, these words may have been uttered at that moment to secure the absence of this disturbing element from the feast of love that was to follow.—*Wm. M. Campbell.*

Ver. 19. *The moving of conscience.*—This question indicates a deep stirring of conscience, quickened by God. It

is a question of which every human soul at some time or other is more or less cognisant, whatever may be the answer given to it. It is a question which is vital to any adequate conception either of the sinfulness of sin, or of the standard of personal duty, or of the ideal walk of the regenerate spirit with God.

**I. Consider it in some of the various motives and intentions** with which a human soul may conceivably put the question to God. 1. Clearly it may be put (God protect us from it!) in a spirit of insolent hardness. Thus Judas put it. A man to whom sin is not sinful, to whom self-gratification is the law of his being, who neither fears God nor regards man, may say, "Lord, is it I?" But he will not care for an answer, nor wait to hear it given. 2. It may be put also in a spirit of shallow and ignorant levity. We little know what possibilities of good and also of evil are hidden in our wonderful and complex nature—to what heights of goodness we may rise, into what abysses of infamy we may fall. 3. It is also the question of a holy self-distrust. There are so many pitfalls at our feet, such woful surprises, such mortifying recollections of hopes disappointed, opportunities neglected, duties omitted, blessings lost, that "Lord, is it I?" is often the aching, frightened question of a bewildered though honest spirit, fearful of losing itself in the mazes and obscurities of its unknown tendencies, and quite distinct from the morbid self-questionings of spiritual egotism.

**II. There are circumstances which from time to time suggest if they do not compel it;** and so sinuous and intricate are the windings of the human heart, so apt are even true natures to be deceived by refined sophistries, or encouraged to mistake transient emotion for the continuous action of dominant principles, that it is almost necessary for us, if we would adequately know ourselves, and habitually rule ourselves, to be forced to find ourselves out as we stand in the light of God.

1. The sight of a brother's sin may be wholesome though humbling in making us recognise that only by the grace of God we are what we are. Had we been tempted as he was tempted, might not we have fallen perhaps lower? Or we may ourselves have been exposed to the fiery trial of temptation and been saved, yet so as "by fire." We never knew till now how strong was the strength of God, how weak the weakness of man. 2. There are also occasions in life which, like mountain-peaks rising out of a level plain to break its monotony and form its landmarks, bring us face to face with hidden corners in our personal life, and make us feel with a thrill of gladness the good hand of our God upon us. Sometimes it is a special mercy, which makes us wonder how God can be so good to us.—*Bishop Thorold.*

"*Is it I?*"—It was a good sign that the first thought of each of them was about the possibility of his own sin. When a man foresees a great temptation that is coming, it is always better that, instead of turning to his neighbours and saying, as he searches their faces, "I wonder who will do this wicked thing?" he should turn to himself and say, "Is it possible that I am the man who will do it?" When the wind is rising, it is good for each ship at sea to look to its own ropes and sails, and not stand gazing to see how ready the other ships are to meet it. We all feel that we would rather hear a man asking about himself anxiously than to see him so sure of himself that the question never occurred to him. We should be surer of his standing firm if we saw that he knew he was in danger of a fall.

I. There are times in the lives of all of us, I think, when that comes to us which came here to Christ's disciples.—Beneath us, as beneath them, the worst possibilities of our nature sometimes reveal themselves. Such times are not our worst times certainly. Often they are times which, by their very sense of danger, are the safest and strongest of our lives. But

they are often moments that dismay us. They come in upon our self-complacency and shock it with their ominous presence. 1. One of them is the time when we see deep and flagrant sin in some other man. When some great crime is done, when through the community there runs the story of some frightful cruelty or dreadful fraud, I think that almost all of us are conscious of a strange mixture of two emotions, one of horror and the other of a terrible familiarity. The act is repugnant to all our conscientiousness; but the powers that did the act, and the motives that persuaded the doing of it, are powers which we possess and motives which we have felt. When you read the story of yesterday's defaulter fleeing to-day, an exile and an outcast, or sitting gloomily behind his prison bars, it is not with an angel's innocent wonder what a sin like this can mean; it is with the understanding of a man who has felt the same temptation to which this poor wretch has yielded, that you deplore his fate. With simple wonder an angel might walk through our State prison-halls; but a man must walk there full of humbleness and charity; for as the best man that ever lived finds something of common humanity in us which makes his goodness seem not impossible to us, so the worst of men stirs by the sight of his human sin some sense of what human power of sinfulness we too possess. 2. Another of the occasions which let us see our own possibility of sin, which open to us a glimpse of how wicked we might be, is when we do some small sin and recognise the deep power of sinfulness by which we do it. A pure, honest boy cheats with his first little timid fraud, and on the other side, the bad side of him, the door flies open, and he sees the possibility that he too should be the swindler whose enormous frauds make the whole city tremble. The slightest crumbling of the earth under your feet makes you aware of the precipice. The least impurity makes you ready to cry out, as some image of hideous lust rises



before you, "Oh, is it I? Can I come to that?" 3. And yet another occasion when we become aware of our own bad possibility is the expression of any suspicion about us by another person. I think that for you or me to find our names linked to-morrow in this community with some great crime of which we knew that we were totally innocent must stir the mystery of our inner life, and make us see what capacity of sin is lying there. I think our disavowal of the sin that we were charged with would be not boisterously angry, but quiet and solemn and humble, with a sense of danger and a gratitude for preservation. I think that ought to be the influence. And even the boisterousness with which some men deny a charge against their characters is still a sign in a worse way of how their conscience has been touched. Would you want the clerk in your store to be charged with dishonesty, and not go back to his work, when the charge had been disproved, with a deepened perception of temptation and a quickened watchfulness and care? 4. By a strange but very natural process the same result often comes from just the opposite cause. Not merely when men suspect us and charge us with wrong-doing, but when men praise us and say that we are good, this same recognition of how bad we have the power to be often arises. A man comes up to our life, and, looking round upon the crowd of our fellow-men, he says, "See, I will strike the life of this brother of ours, and you shall hear how true it rings." He does strike it, and it does seem to them to ring true, and they shout their applause; but we whose life is struck feel running all through us at the stroke the sense of hollowness. 5. Is it not also true that every temptation which comes to us, however bravely and successfully it may be resisted, opens to us the sight of some of our human capacity of sin? The man who dares to laugh at a temptation which he has felt and resisted is not yet wholly safe out of its power.

II. What is this but saying that in every serious moment of life the possibility of sin stands up before us?—None but the man who has no serious moments, none but he who makes all life a play, escapes the sight. To every other man—nay, may we not say to every man, since no man is literally always a trifter?—to every man at some time the clouds roll back, the spell is broken, and he sees what a power of being wicked as of being good belongs to him just as man. 1. Is it good for him to see this? Will it help him or harm him? That will depend upon the way it works in him. It may become in him either paralysis or inspiration. One man sees his danger, and stands powerless. Another man sees his danger, and every faculty is strung to its intensest strength. If the feet are set more resolutely toward goodness, and the hands lay hold more firmly upon help, it is good for us to know how wicked we may be, how great our danger is. 2. What is it that makes that difference? How is the consciousness of our danger prevented from becoming a depressing emotion and turned into an inspiring motive? It must be by opening the life upon the other side. It must be by realising the possibilities of our human life for good as well as for evil, by seeing and never forgetting how good we have a chance to be, as well as how bad we may become. This is the power of hope; and hope is the true master of fear. A merchant hopes to be rich, and the fear of being poor, instead of being a vexing anxiety, becomes the humble servant of his expectation, and helps him on toward wealth. The fear of death is terrible to a sick man until the hope of life and strength and activity opens before him; and then in his convalescence the fear of death has ceased to depress him as a feeling, and only remains with him as a motive to caution and watchfulness. Thus fear is always good when it has hope to rule it. 3. Now if you saw a young man overwhelmed with the sight on which our

eyes have been fixed to-day; if you saw him so full of the consciousness of the power of sin in his life, the possibility of the badness that he might do and be, that he was wretched and paralysed,—what would you do for him? Would you try to make him forget what he had seen? Would you try to shut out the mystery of his life from him, and make him live again the life of narrow satisfaction in the present which he lived before he looked down into the deep gulf? You could not do it. But if you could, would it be well? Surely not. What you need to do for him is to make him lift up his eyes and see the heights above him. You want to make him like the climber on a ladder, who looks up and not down, who climbs not to escape the gulf below him, but to reach the top above him, and who feels the gulf below him only as a power that makes the hold of foot and hand on every round of the ladder which they strike more firm. Now it is the glory of the Christian gospel that in the treatment of man's spiritual nature it preserves this true relation between hope and fear perfectly. 4. I suggested just now the analogy between our physical and moral consciousness, between our consciousness of the power to be sick and the consciousness of the power to sin. It is an analogy which illustrates what I have just been saying. There is a nervousness about health which is all morbid. It is full of imaginations. There are people who can never hear a disease described without thinking that they have it. They never hear a sick man talk without feeling all his symptoms repeated in themselves. You think of such a person and realise his wretchedness. Then you look away from him to a perfectly healthy man who seldom thinks about being sick at all. But yet he is something different from what he would be if there were no power of sickness in him. Unconscious for the most part, but now and then coming forth into consciousness, there is always present with him a sense of his humanity, with all the

liabilities which that involves. He does not do what a man would do who had literally a frame of iron. And that is just the condition of the man with the healthy soul. He does not nervously believe, when he hears of any flagrant crime, that he is just upon the brink of that crime himself. He lives in doing righteousness, but all the time he keeps the consciousness that sin, even out to its worst possibilities, sin even to the cruelty of Cain, the lust of David, the treachery of Judas, is open to him.—*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*

Ver. 21. *A wail in the woe.*—There is a wail in the word for “woe,” a tone of lament, if also a tone of reprobation. Indeed, we shall get nearer the meaning of the whole verse if we think of it as an elegy, rather than as a formal sentence on the traitor. Jesus could not lose even “the son of loss” without sorrow. That any man should be base enough to betray “the best Man that e’er wore flesh about Him” might well make even an angel weep. There must have been something good in Judas, or he would not have been, “called to be an apostle”; but there must also have been something horribly mean in a man who, while affecting great love for the poor, could habitually steal from the purse which commonly held so little, but always a little for the destitute and helpless. And how could He who loved all men but mourn over one in whom much that was good and of fair promise had been blighted by a sordid selfishness and covetousness, one who had given place to the devil, and to the meanest of all devils, the most sordid of the spirits that fell? “Good for that man,” etc., was a proverbial expression of blended pity and blame, and must not be taken too literally, since nothing could be good or bad for an unborn man. It means simply that not to have been at all would have been better than to have become such a man as Iscariot was. And there are many of whom this might be said. Judas is not the only

man who has been unfaithful to his ideal, nor the only man who has played the hypocrite and proved a traitor to Christ from selfishness and greed.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

*The grace of God received in vain.*—Judas was treated even as the rest of the apostles up to the moment of his defection. That he was meanwhile so ill disciplined in heart as to be robbing the common purse of his little fraternity almost certainly denotes that he had received this favour before he had become “like a little child”—that he was an exception, in short, to the general rule of the Messiah’s ministry while on earth, and of the Comforter’s dispensation ever since. It was an exception which, considered in all its bearings, was sure to be always remembered and recorded, and might therefore have been made and exhibited in a strong light for the purpose of shewing that the rule from which it was a departure was really no limitation to the free mercy of God in Christ. In the same manner as Adam’s fall proved that the whole human race were incapable of standing without Divine assistance added to their natural powers, even so Judas’ case was perhaps designed to shew that if in the recovery of fallen man the grace of God were more lavishly dispensed, if His Son while on earth or His Spirit now required of us no preparatory frame of heart and mind, we should not be the better for the removal of the apparent restriction in the offer of mercy. To man in that unprepared state of heart the grace of God would be the pearl thrown to swine.—*S. Hinds.*

*Warning from the fall of Judas.*—The Lord, when He pleases, can employ bad men in His service, and bestow splendid abilities and extraordinary spiritual gifts upon them, which He perhaps denies to His dutiful and beloved children. If it be asked why He does this, and why He permits hypocrites, covetous and deceitful workers, to appear among men as angels of light, it may be answered that He has a right to do

what He will with His own, that He giveth no account of His matters, and that from what He has revealed of His character we ought to believe, whether we can always see it or not, that He is righteous in all His ways, holy in all His works, and wise in all His proceedings. But since the fact is so, that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and his ministers appear as ministers of righteousness, that Balaam can prophesy, Judas work miracles, and wicked men preach and pray with great eloquence, we ought to be aware of it, lest we be dazzled or misled, and therefore excited to covet splendid gifts instead of those graces of the Spirit which essentially accompany salvation, and mark us out as real members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.—*W. Richardson.*

Vers. 22-24. *The Holy Communion.*

—When the earnest Christian kneels at the altar to take the Holy Communion, he performs a sixfold act. 1. It is an act of obedience. Not a suggestion merely, not a time-honoured custom only, but a command, explicit, emphatic. 2. It is an act of remembrance. Not that Christ needed a memorial, but that we needed a memory. 3. It is an act of thanksgiving—a eucharist. This is worthy. Nations honour themselves in honouring their heroes. Thus Garibaldi is honoured in Italy, Luther in Germany, Napoleon in France. Thus Italy, and France, and Germany, and all Christian people honour the world’s Hero, the world’s Saviour, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, in this eucharistic feast. 4. It is an act of fellowship—a communion. We join with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven and of earth to magnify the glorious name of God. 5. It is an act of testimony. Every celebration of this Sacrament is one new link in the continuous chain of testimony that comes down through the ages from the upper chamber of Jerusalem. Every hand that takes



this bread and cup joins hands with the unbroken chain of priestly hands that reach back to the pierced hands of Jesus. 6. It is an act of expectancy. We shew forth the Lord's death till He come. We look back, and we look forward "till He come." It is going up to the altar on the mountain-top and looking to the eastern sky to see if there be any sign of the coming dawn.—*R. S. Barrett.*

*The Holy Communion the most solemn Christian service.*—1. If any one were to ask what is the most sacred, solemn, and consoling part of our religious service, that where God has gathered together most abundantly the greatest of His truths and the richest of His graces, where it is that in our life on earth we are brought nearest to heaven, and are most lifted up in heart and spirit, calmly and awfully to feel the presence of the God whom we serve, no well-instructed Christian would doubt how to answer. He would say at once, "In the Holy Communion." 2. What is it that makes it so different from all other acts of prayer and praise? What gives it its matchless solemnity, its matchless savour of heaven, its deep comfort? (1) It is the communication to us of the death and passion of Christ, and in it we are carried back for the time to that One Sacrifice, in which our own pardon was involved, and from which flowed God's mercy to the world. (2) It is the link and bond, while Christians are living in the flesh, between earth and heaven, the meeting-place between the redeemed and their Redeemer, out of sight, but not far off, the communion in which we are again and again joined to the risen and glorified Lord, who is the heavenly strength and life by which our spirits live. (3) Here we have communion also with the whole Church of Christ. Here we who are so separated are one. Here we who most deeply sympathise with one another, and we who never could be brought on earth to understand each other, are practically joined in one;

for both break the bread and pour the wine, and receive it as the token that the Lord had died for them, that the Lord hath pardoned us, that the Lord is nigh.—*Dean Church.*

*The presence of Christ in the Eucharist.*—1. I say and confess with the Evangelists and with St. Paul that the bread on the which thanks are given is the body of Christ in the remembrance of Him and His death, to be set forth perpetually of the faithful until His coming. 2. I say and confess the bread which we break to be the communion and partaking of Christ's body with the ancient and the faithful Fathers. 3. I say and believe that there is not only a signification of Christ's body set forth by the Sacrament, but also that therewith is given to the godly and faithful the grace of Christ's body—that is, the food of life and immortality; and this I hold with Cyprian. 4. I say also, with St. Augustine, that we eat life and we drink life; with Emissene, that we feel the Lord to be present in grace; with Athanasius, that we receive celestial food which cometh from above; the property of natural communion, with Hilary; the nature of flesh and benediction which giveth life, in bread and wine, with Cyril; and, with the same Cyril, the virtue of the very flesh of Christ, life and grace of His body, the property of the Only-Begotten, that is to say life, as He Himself in plain words expoundeth it. 5. I confess also, with Basil, that we receive the mystical advent and coming of Christ, grace, and the virtue of His very nature; the Sacrament of His very flesh, with Ambrose; the body by grace, with Epiphanius; spiritual flesh, but not that which was crucified, with Jerome; grace flowing into a sacrifice, and the grace of the Spirit, with Chrysostom; grace and invisible verity, grace and society of the members of Christ's body, with Augustine. 6. Finally, with Bertram, I confess that Christ's body is in the Sacrament in this respect—namely, as he writeth, because there is in it the

Spirit of Christ, that is, the power of the Word of God, which not only feedeth the soul, but also cleanseth it. Out of these I suppose it may clearly appear unto all men how far we are from that opinion whereof some go about falsely to slander us to the world, saying we teach that the godly and faithful should receive nothing else at the Lord's table but a figure of the body of Christ.—*Bishop Ridley.*

*Christ's presence in the Eucharist to unworthy receivers.*—May we say, then, that Christ is really present in the Sacrament as well to the unworthy as to the faithful receivers? Yes, this we must grant, yet must we add withal that He is really present with them in a quite contrary manner; really present He is, because virtually present to both—because the operation or efficacy of His body and blood is not metaphorical but real in both. Thus the bodily sun, though locally distant for its substance, is really present by its heat and light as well to sore eyes as to clear sights, but really present to both by a contrary real operation; and by the like contrary operation it is really present to clay and to wax, it really hardeneth the one and really softeneth the other. So doth Christ's body and blood, by its invisible but real influence, mollify the hearts of such as come to the Sacrament with due preparation, but harden such as unworthily receive the consecrated elements. If he that will hear the Word must take heed how he hears, much more must he which means to receive the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood be careful how he receives.—*T. Jackson.*

*The mystery of the Eucharist.*—The words, "Take, and eat: it is My body. Take, and drink: it is the cup of My blood," understood in their true meaning, literally and without metaphor, are to human reason a mystery unheard of and impenetrable. The bread that Jesus offers to His apostles is no longer merely bread, but His body which is about to be sacrificed; the

cup which He gives them to drink is no longer merely wine, but His own blood which is about to be shed. The apostles understood it so. They did not ask, "How can this be done?" In the simplicity and fulness of their faith, knowing that the power of the Master was boundless, and that the truth was in Him, they believed on His words, and partook of His body and His blood under the forms of bread and wine. What Jesus had said a year before to the people of Galilee at Capernaum (John vi. 35, etc.), He realised on this day a few hours before His death. He taught them that He was the "Bread of Life," that in eating of Him they should live; that if they ate not the flesh of the Son of Man and drank not His blood, they should not have life; that His flesh was the true meat, and His blood the true drink; that he who ate of His flesh and drank of His blood should dwell in Him. The people, shocked and scandalised, had turned away, asking ironically how He would give any man His flesh to eat. "How" was now explained.—*Father Didon.*

*The significance of the Eucharist.*—This scene contains the whole religion of Jesus. In this single moment of His life He realises it at one stroke in its perfection. He appears at once as Priest and Victim, as creating the eternal priesthood and the eternal sacrifice. He reveals without metaphor or parable the reason of His death. John had rightly called Him "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." How are men to profit by the personal atonement which the Son of God comes to accomplish? They must be incorporated in the Victim who delivers Himself up and dies for their sakes. And Jesus requires not only that there should be a spiritual union with His spirit and His person—His design is a grander one. His aim is a spiritual and material union together; His design is that man, being both spirit and matter, body and soul,

should be united in spirit and reality to His whole being—to the Son of God and the Son of Man—to His Divinity and His humanity, to His soul and His body. His design is that he should believe on His Word, and become through faith one and the same spirit with Him—that he should eat of His body and drink of His blood, and be incorporated in the flesh of the Son of Man.—*Ibid.*

*The Eucharist an extension of the Incarnation.*—Gregory Nazianzen defines the Eucharist, “a communion of the incarnation of God.” For in that He affirms the bread to be His body, and the wine to be His blood; by receiving this body and blood of Christ, and so changing it into the substance of our body and blood by way of nourishment, the body of Christ becomes our body and His blood is made our blood, and we become in a mystical manner flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. And as in His conception of the Holy Virgin He took upon Him the nature of man that He might save man, so in His Holy Sacrament He takes upon Him the nature of every man in singular that He might save every man who becomes one with Him in the Divine Sacrament of His body and blood. His real incarnation was only in one, but His mystical incarnation in many; and hence comes this Sacrament to be an instrument whereby Christ is conveyed unto us, His benefits applied, and so our faith confirmed.—*J. Mede.*

*The Eucharist* is on the one side the perfection of the sustenance of life in personal communion, on the other a use of the products of the earth as instruments of communion, implying the necessity of taking the whole nature into communion if it is to be real, the symbols of creation and of the Lord's body in one. The life of the disciples with Christ was exchanged for a life in Christ: they abode as branches in the Vine of which His Father is the Husbandman. The bread took for them the place of the body through which they had first

learnt to converse with a living Lord. The wine took for them the place of the blood in which His life had dwelt. In that feast of blessing and thanksgiving, that joyful participation of accepted sacrifice, no life was found too earthly to be offered on the altar of the Cross, or to become a means of human fellowship and Divine communion.—*Prof. F. J. A. Hort.*

*Communion.*—1. Communion is permanent, yet needs times of revival. 2. All Christian life is sacramental. Not alone in our highest act of communion are we partaking of heavenly powers through earthly signs and vehicles. 3. This neglected faith may be revived through increased sympathy with the earth derived from fuller knowledge, through the fearless love of all things.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 22. *Analogies between Christ's body and bread.*—1. As bread is the strength and state of our natural life, so Christ is for our spiritual, being all in all. 2. As bread is loathed of the full stomach, but most acceptable to the hungry soul, so Christ is most welcome to such as “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” 3. As bread is usual and daily, so Christ should be to the Christian, feeding on that bread which came down from heaven, the soul's ordinary refectory. 4. As bread is made one loaf of many grains, so we that are many are one bread and one body, because we are all partakers of one bread. 5. As corn is cut down with the scythe, threshed in the barn with many stripes, torn in the mill with much violence, then bolted and sifted, last of all baked with extreme heat in the oven, and all this that it may be fit meat for our body, so Christ in His ripe age was cut down by cruel death, His body was whipped, His flesh rent asunder, His soul was as it were melted in the fiery furnace of God's anger; and all this that He might become food for our soul, that we might eat of this bread and drink of this cup.—*Dean Boys.*



Vers. 23, 24. *The blood of Jesus Christ* becomes, through His goodness, milk for His children, a band of union to His members, the seal of His covenant, and the ransom of His slaves; and, on the contrary, through the wickedness of the imitators of Judas, it becomes to them a mortal poison, a sword of separation, the seal of their reprobation, and the cause of an eternal captivity.—*P. Quesnel*.

Ver. 25. *The new Passover*.—Jesus never partook afterwards of the Passover—never, that we know of, celebrated the Eucharist with His disciples. It is said, indeed, that after His resurrection “He was known of them in breaking of bread”; but this can hardly be so applied. Rather say that the Holy Spirit of Christ is in His Church, which is His new body, even as His fleshy frame was when this declaration was made. When, therefore, after the descent of the Holy Ghost—when, at this day, a Christian congregation partakes of the new Passover, Christ is in the midst of them, they are His body and members in particular. He is then as truly present, and as truly a partaker in the ceremony of “drinking the fruit of the vine,” as when His Divine nature was united only with the Man Christ Jesus. In this sense He fulfilled His declaration to the apostles, and in this sense continues, in every age of the Church, to drink the fruit of the vine in His own kingdom, the kingdom of God on earth. He said that He would drink it *new*, because it was thenceforth to assume a new character and efficacy. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, God’s former appointments—to make all things new.—*S. Hinds*.

*Communion in heaven*.—Let us take care to raise our hearts from the sacramental communion here on earth to the eternal communion in heaven, to be celebrated there not under veils or sensible symbols, but openly and without veils. The sight of truth, unveiled and perfectly disclosed to our eyes, is a torrent of delight and joy,

which as it were inebriates the soul, makes it forget all the afflictions and miseries of the earth, and transports it out of itself, in order to its living only in the truth, upon the truth, and for the truth.—*P. Quesnel*.

Ver. 26. *Jesus singing*.—That song is like an aureola encircling that little company in the gathering gloom. There is no concord between light and darkness, no real affinity between woe and song. One is from above, the other from beneath. One is a daughter of the skies, the other a child of perdition. Musical harmonies are not heard in the outer darkness, breaking sweetly on the ear amid the awful discords of despair. But heaven is a land of song. Joyous strains are heard constantly echoing in sweetest refrain over the “bright plains” of paradise. 1. Christ singing! And at such a time! The hour and power of darkness approaching. The agony of Gethsemane and the darkness of the Cross near. He knows it all, yet calmly sings. What a vision is here of holy confidence and anticipated triumph! Apparently Christ on the eve of defeat; the powers of darkness on that of victory. But He sings. Glad omen for the cause of redemption. Such singing does not indicate a discouraged leader or a defeated cause. 2. The disciples sang. This would have a tendency to neutralise the effect of the “exceeding sorrow” that oppressed them. It would prevent a panic until the “hour” had come. 3. In time of danger and in the face of the coming storm, how much depends, under God, on the leader! Napoleon in the hearts of his soldiers fights and wins an Austerlitz or a Jena. The spirit of Wellington pervades Waterloo and saves Europe. Jesus can sing on the eve of the Waterloo of the world’s redemption. Such a leader, such a spirit, such a song, animates His people to meet foes, “fight the good fight of faith,” and conquer. Blessed paradox! The darkest hours may still be bright with

the light of the heavenly sun. The Eternal Father and Friend is "at the helm."—*Wm. M. Campbell.*

*The spirit in which to meet the trials of life.*—Praise is an exercise in the spirit of which we should meet the trials of life. I use the term "spirit" as distinguished from the outward act, from the mere utterance of words or melody of sounds, and to guard against the idea that apart from those feelings of which it ought to be the expression and accompaniment any form of worship is entitled to the commendation given in Scripture to the exercise of praising God. The exercise is founded on a knowledge and belief of the Divine perfections; it is not so much a mechanical as a spiritual act—it is not the exercise of musical taste, but of devotional feeling—it is the admiring contemplation of the Divine perfections, expressed in the appropriate forms of inspired devotion. Be it yours to rise from the contemplation of second causes to the contemplation of the First Cause, in adoring admiration of Him who appoints and arranges all according to His unerring will. Be it yours to remember that the hand which removed the gourd you delighted in likewise bestowed it,—that the worm which withers has been sent by Him, not in wrath, but in love; not to leave your heads defenceless against the scorching sun or the pelting storm, but to lead you to abide in a safer and sweeter peace under the shadow of the Almighty. Trials thus met would be deprived of their sting. And did either your own interests or those of Christianity require that sufferings as great as those which martyrs have endured should be appointed you, encountering them in the same spirit, you would come out of them with the same triumph.—*R. Brodie.*

Ver. 27. *Christ the Shepherd*—1. As descending from ancient patriarchs who were shepherds. They were types of Him. 2. He knows His sheep, and marks them for His own

(John x. 3, 14). God sets His seal on them (2 Tim. ii. 19). 3. He feeds their souls and bodies in green pastures (Ps. xxiii.), and drives them to the sweet streams and waters of comfort by the paths of grace and righteousness. 4. He defends them from the wolf and enemies; they being timorous, simple, weak, shiftless creatures, unable to fly, resist, or save themselves. 5. He nourishes the young and tender lambs. 6. He seeks them when they go astray, and rejoices to find them. 7. He brings them to the fold. (1) The fold of grace. (2) The fold of glory.—*T. Taylor, D.D.*

*Christ smitten, an example to us.*—

1. He suffered for no necessity or desert, but by voluntary humility, whereas we deserve fiery trials. 2. He suffered not for His own cause, but ours; and shall not we for His? 3. He despised the shame; and why should not we? 4. The end of His Cross was the exaltation at God's right hand; and we expect the same.—*Ibid.*

*The sheep scattered.*—Why were the disciples thus scattered? 1. Their own weakness and carnal fear made them fly to save themselves. They had not counted the cost of their profession. Nor had they yet received the Holy Spirit, which afterwards kept them strong and steadfast. 2. God in His wisdom would have Christ deserted, because He was to be known to tread "the winepress of God's wrath alone." 3. Thus it behoved the Scripture to be fulfilled, in regard of Christ Himself, who, voluntarily undertaking the grievous burden of our sin, must be forsaken by all for the time. 4. To teach us that all our safety depends on our relation to the Chief Shepherd. Without Christ we lie dispersed, ungathered, and forlorn.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 28. *The promised meeting in Galilee.*—Why in Galilee? 1. That our Lord and His disciples may more surely enjoy one another without fear of the Jews, and that He may instruct them in the things concerning the kingdom of heaven. 2. Because Christ

had more disciples and favourites in Galilee to whom He would familiarly offer Himself and manifest His resurrection than in Judea. 3. His disciples belonged to Galilee, and He would bring them to the place where He found them. 4. They must follow their calling till Christ came, and for the time before they can get into Galilee He will be there before them, waiting for them.—*Ibid.*

*Christ going before.*—It is a very great consolation to the diseased and infirm members to be assured that their Head will not abandon them when they fall, but that He will even go before them. If Jesus did not vouchsafe to come to meet us in the power of His new-raised life—that is, by powerful graces—how should we be able ever to rise and go to Him?—*P. Quesnel.*

*Christ the Leader.*—He is always going before His followers as an Infallible Teacher, as a Faithful Friend,

and as a Mighty Leader; He went before Joseph to Egypt; He went before Moses to the land of Midian, and through the wilderness to the Promised Land; He went before Daniel to the lions' den; He went before the three brave-hearted Babylonian nonconformists to the fiery furnace; He went before Paul to Rome and John to Patmos. And He will faithfully go before us in our paths of duty, in all our trials and temptations, and in sickness and death we shall find Him going before us.

Ver. 29. *The rashness of the heart.*—When we love, we think ourselves capable of anything. Suffering or death seems nothing to us. Of all kinds of rashness, the most incurable and the most unreflecting, and at the same time the most excusable, because it is the most sincere, is not the rashness of the mind or the will, but the rashness of the heart.—*Father Didon.*

# MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 32—42.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxvi. 36-46; LUKE xxii. 39-46.)

*The agony in the garden.*—In our Litany we plead with our Lord by His agony and bloody sweat. From among the events of His life we thus select the agony in the garden as one of the most important. We bring it, if we may so say, to our Lord's remembrance. We are convinced that it bore a prominent part in working out our salvation. The remembrance of it will operate to make Him grant our requests. No passage of His life is more mysterious; we should approach the topic with awe and reverence, taking as it were the shoes off our feet, because it is holy ground that we purpose to visit.

I. His sufferings on the Cross had not yet begun. **What was the cause of this exceeding distress?** 1. Chiefly, mainly, I believe, it was the grief of His whole life. He was in the place of sinners; He was the representative of sinners; He was suffering for sinners, bearing their punishment, and their punishment is that God hides His face from them; and the holier, the more loving, the more capable, the soul of the Christ was, the more bitter to Him was this punishment, which others deserved and He endured. 2. There were special reasons why the suffering thus produced should at this time press with extreme violence on His soul. He had completed other work; He had trained His apostles, finished the work given Him to do, had reissued the law, had fulfilled all types and prophecies, had revealed the Divine character, had exhibited the type of perfect manhood; and so the work of suffering and expiation alone remained. No more controversy, no more teaching—only endurance. The mind could no longer be diverted by other employment from that which lay before Him in the way of suffering.



3. All this suffering was foreseen, anticipated; it was not like our sufferings, which are mercifully hidden from us. 4. There are also other explanations of the horror of great darkness through which He now passed. He said a little farther on that it was the hour of His enemies and the power of darkness. We believe that Satan now put forth all his power to crush Him. Then we may also believe that the fear of death, the fear of all that was to come to body, mind, and spirit, all the agonising sufferings of the Cross, depressed the human soul of the Redeemer. 5. Again, He was denied those consolations which have made martyrs, under excruciating sufferings, triumphant. What is it makes a martyr meekly, gladly, patiently endure, though every nerve be racked? It is the infusion of God's grace, a drop of the joy of heaven, a cordial sent by God on high to support the soul of His faithful witness. But this is just what was denied the Christ while bearing, as our representative, the burden of our sins. 6. We see, too, in the narrative the mark of another trial, viz. disappointment, owing to the failure of human support and sympathy.

**II. What is to be learnt from this passage.**—1. This passage should impress on us that our salvation was no easy work. Creation, with all its wonders, might be effected by a word. He had only to speak, and it was done; but to recover mankind, to cancel sin, to extricate the race from Satan's usurped dominion—this was a task which cost much. This required the infinite descent, the inconceivable mystery of the Son of God emptying Himself, laying aside His garments of light, taking the form of a servant, humbling Himself to one descent after another, divesting Himself, as far as possible, of the exercise of the attributes of Godhead, acting through a created nature, submitting to humiliations, and laying Himself open to the keenest inroads of pain, spiritual, mental, and physical. Every time we plead with Him by His agony and bloody sweat, we should remember that our salvation cost Him pain, and that we must not expect ourselves without tribulation to enter into the kingdom of God. 2. We see the completeness of our Lord's manhood. He took not only our body, but our mind, our most essential and distinctive quality, our will. He cries, "Not My will, but Thine." He had therefore a will, as Man; and His perfection was that He bowed His human will, sacrificed it, adjusted it, subjected it to the Divine will. 3. We see that it is not wrong to make known our wishes to God in prayer. We may shrink from pain, we may ask to be spared suffering, so long as we do so in entire submission to the Divine will. We may ask that the cup of suffering may pass from us, if only we are willing to drain it cheerfully, when God signifies His will that we should drink it. And because we may have to give up our wills in a great matter, it is well to practise ourselves to get power over our will in smaller matters. 4. Observe our Great Master and Pattern called God His Father in the very crisis of bowing His human will to the greatest sacrifice that will of man ever made, to entire accordance, perfect submission to, and acquiescence in the Divine appointment, though it involved inconceivable sufferings: "Abba, Father." May God produce in all of us a faith in the Fatherhood of God! Then we too shall be able to bear pain, to go into a crisis in faith, and to come out of it, as our Master did, unscathed. 5. Lastly, notice in this crisis that our Lord was not so engrossed with His own surpassing agony as not to attend to His disciples, and strive to rouse, stimulate, and shame them to better endeavours. He graciously makes allowance for them, acknowledges that the spirit is ready though the flesh is weak. He honours them by requesting their support and sympathy; He returns to them more than once; He rouses them at last that they may not be discredited by their negligence when the enemy is close at hand. Of those given Him, He will not lose one. May God give us grace to be, after His example, thoughtful for others, if God should be pleased to visit us with exhausting and engrossing sufferings!—*Canon Burrows.*

*Gethsemane.*—We may here learn our true attitude in suffering. The clouds which darken the sky of this transitory life have gathered over us all, and maybe their shadows fall upon some of you now. Adversity is an inheritance we cannot decline, forced upon us all, and forced because we have not sufficient grace to choose and bear it for virtue's sake. Suffering—and by that I mean all the pains and trials, physical, intellectual, spiritual, which attack mankind—is inevitable. It may vary in degree and kind, but in some measure we all are its victims; and every doubt, every sick-bed, every grave, seals this true. There is no exemption, and the noblest hearts seem to hold the most; and looking ahead, we ask the question, not for the first time—

“Is it so, O Christ in heaven, that the highest suffer most,  
That the strongest wander farthest and most hopelessly are lost,  
That the mark of rank in nature is capacity for pain,  
That the anguish of the singer makes the sweetness of the strain?”

It may appear strange that one cup should contain so much more of bitterness than another. The best and perhaps only way of coming to know the “Why?” of these things is to bear a right attitude towards them, and towards Him whose care never fails, whose wisdom never errs, whose love never changes. Affliction is not calamity to the one who knows how to bear it, but a mine of inexhaustible wealth; and though the sun may go down, yet to the one who can read the heavens even the night will bring its joyful truths. Remember there is another side to the cloud under which you dwell, and there is light and deliverance and an everlasting Father.

**I. Christ's suffering did not shake His confidence in God.**—“All things are possible unto Thee; remove this cup from Me.” There was the recognition of God's power. The night was dark, but He did not cry, “There is no light!” The cup was bitter, but there was no complaint or cruel charge. The burden was heavy, but weakness never suggested, “There is no deliverer!” Brethren, do we not feel condemned when we recall our weakness and unbelief, when overtaken by adversity? At times God lets His shadow fall upon us, and we think it cold and harsh and meaningless. But instead of concluding that the sun has been extinguished when he sets, instead of idle, weak complaints, making the time bitter unto us, let us labour to discover the treasure of His love in the severest stroke He deals us. As in nature, so in grace, there must be a change of seasons. When grim winter appears and closes the eye and damps the smile of mother-earth, clothing her in a snow-white shroud, and freezing her body hard and cold, think we that her life has gone and we must starve, for nature's cupboard is empty and cannot be replenished? Nay; we remember it lay as helpless but a year ago; but creeping beneath the sun's directer rays it day by day revived, and the spring and summer came, followed by ripe old autumn with his lap full of golden fruit. Oh, how often shall the Master save us ere we cease to be afraid? When shall we learn to trustfully repose, through hope and despair, through joy and sorrow, in that eternal principle of truth, “We know that to them that love God all things work together for good”? “All things are possible unto Thee; remove this cup from Me.” The prayer is, however, by no means complete here. There must be something more than the acknowledgment of God's power. We may come to God and say, “Thou art able,” and He answering may declare, “I am willing.” But should He declare, “I am not willing,” what then? If there be nothing more than the acknowledgment of God's ability, the result will be disappointment and unbelief; and according to the estimate we had of God's ability there will follow this bitterness. “Howbeit, not what I will, but what Thou wilt.”

**II. The complete submission of Christ's will to the Father's.**—Christ has expressed the desire of His heart, He has prayed for deliverance; but He

closes His petition, He interrupts His very agonies, He turns right round to the Father and bows in adoring submission to His will; and how He suffered it we know. This, brethren, is the true spirit of prayer. To pray is not to claim unconditionally, to ask what we want and selfishly require it. It is the soul's request submitted to the will of God. We must remember our ignorance, the restive desires of our hearts, the circumscribed present only visible to us; and realising all this, and more, we must pray, but leave our prayer in His hands, not dictating what we would have God do, but beseeching Him to grant our requests as they accord with His will, which is our eternal welfare. And if the answer come as we call, if the blessing descend whilst we still linger at the throne of grace, let us be thankful. But, on the other hand, if no voice replies, if the long-sought blessing be delayed, yea, and if it be delayed for ever and never greets us, still let us be thankful, rejoicing to forsake our own desires when the wisdom of God beckons us away. Our disappointment is our gain; the frustration of our hopes is our everlasting benefit. The supreme purpose of our life should be to know the will of God, and our zealous care to gain this patient, gentle grace, submission, which quickly turns its face whichever way the current of God's Spirit flows, and with swift obedience answers each movement of His will. The knowledge of His will interprets our duty, which is the fulfilment of that will. There are truths we do not know, we cannot know; and many are the things which are veiled from our sight, for the revelation of which we must wait. They lie beyond the haze which surrounds and circumscribes our vision here, in a clearer, purer atmosphere. A time will come, and come speedily, when this concealing cloud shall be the pathway for our feet, and when we shall begin to know these hidden truths; but believe me, brethren, that time will also tell us of eternal secrets yet unveiled, and we shall find a path for our abiding faith. Our pride and unbelief must be quenched, and the Father's will must reign supreme, the song of our heart ever rising in clear notes to the attentive sky, "Not my will but Thine be done." It was this complete submission which led the Saviour to His death.

III. **The victory of the Cross was gained in Gethsemane.**—The Crucifixion was public, but the Saviour bore it first in secret. The hardship and grief of the soldier is not as he stands in the midst of the fight, but as he takes one farewell glance at the window yonder, where his child waves its tiny handkerchief and his bereaved wife sobs her pain away. The trial of Archbishop Cranmer was not greatest when he stood in the curling smoke and thrust his hand in the devouring flame, but in the agony it cost him to go there. And it was even so with our agonising Lord. He saw the cruel Cross as He knelt in Gethsemane, He felt the wounds of the nails, and wept as He heard the cries of the mocking crowd He died to save. He saw and felt it all as He wrestled there. If we would discover the secret of our Lord's strength, we shall find it in those nights of earnest prayer spent upon the green slopes of the mountain. Our prayers may cast us, as Daniel of old, in the lions' den, but they shall close the lions' mouths. And now what consolation is ours and what remaineth unto us? We are not left comfortless, brethren; the Saviour has provided for His absence. The Spirit comes as a heavenly messenger to remind us that we have interests beyond, a Father who loves, a Saviour who intercedes, a throne vacant, till we gain the shore.—*S. W. Kay.*

Ver. 37. *The hour of watching.*—There is an unknown element in human nature which makes the sympathy of others a necessary factor in our life. A writer has told us that joy unshared loses half its glow, and that the weight of sorrow is threefold heavier if there be none to watch with the sufferer. Specially in our



dark moments of spiritual need we cry aloud for just one soul, one only, to watch with us, that we be not left alone. We pity the man who has to take a solitary path through the world; and if we have known the deep privilege of walking through the sunlight and shadow of earth with some sympathetic human soul, we recognise in how terrible a blank moves the unaccompanied life.

**I. This half-sorrowful and half-indignant cry is just one of those cries for sympathy, for friendship.**—The Bible never hesitates to emphasise the true humanity of Christ—His anger, His sorrow, His pity, His hunger and thirst and weariness, His need of love and fellowship. He could face, with all the self-reliance of His loving purpose, the frown of His critics and enemies, the scribes and Pharisees, the lawyers and the Roman soldiers; but here in the solitude of the garden He could not face without remonstrance the loneliness of the human heart. He pleaded for one hour of watching with Him. He knew, no doubt, that His disciples could not help Him much. Their simple and child-like natures were too far from His for that; and it was not until He was taken from them that they even began to understand what He was. Certainly they never guessed what He was suffering. And we, had we been there, with all our larger knowledge and deeper insight—we should have been, if sleepless, at least as dumb as they. For this is one of the tragic colours in the picture, that, whereas we can trace clearly enough all those outward forms, we do not know the depth of all they represent. We cannot tell what He suffered for the sins of men. Into the depths of that story the world has never entered. That patience, that humility, that love, have never been felt, fathomed, or rightly understood even by the most sacred spirits of earth. A very immortality of pain is centred in that one short hour.

**II. Does not the cry ring down to us across the ages like a peal of thunder?**  
—1. It is primarily in our own personal life that we are thus called upon to watch with Christ. To all of us there comes, sometimes in little things, sometimes in great things, a temptation, an impulse to do what we know to be wrong—a time when our spiritual principles, our Christian temper, is put to the proof, and the hour of trial comes to the Christ within us. It is then that we are alone like He was, in the sense that we have to face and conquer that temptation without help from others; it is then that He appeals to us most earnestly to watch with Him one hour, to watch until the temptation has passed, and we come out victorious. There is a moral truth of a very supreme value in the words “one hour.” For the temptation that is thus met in the spirit of Christ is a brief one. It loses its power over us, and every successful resistance of it makes it less formidable on its next return. That is the true watchfulness that watches not, like the old ascetics, that it may shun temptation, but, like Christ, that it may meet and subdue it. We see, in a word, that trial and temptation are rather less things to be shunned than blessings in disguise, angels with hidden wings. The first step, as Socrates has warned us, in spiritual progress is learning to know ourselves, our own powers and potentialities, just as the soldier learns the work of shield and spear and the measure of his own courage only in the heat of the fight. Above all, we learn our own weakness, and so open the way for fresh watchfulness. Temptation, thus used, becomes the great helper in human development. We grow larger under God’s discipline, and emerge from it with new faculties and a finer character. We have seen something of the deep things of God, and can never more shake off the vision of them. If we have thus watched with Christ, we are in a manner sharing His sufferings and receiving His sanctification; and though, if we are wise, we shall love good because it is good and hate evil because it is evil, quite apart from any results they bring, that may fairly be our hope and prospect in the hours when we are tempted. While, on the other hand, if we have slept

in the time of trial, there is the miserable thought that we have disappointed our Master's hope. 2. The appeal comes to us not only as individuals, but as members of the organic body we call "the Church." Whatever may be thought of the very singular age in which we live, we are all agreed on one point, that it is an age of transition, a time whose thoughts and feelings and ideals are not fixed, permanent, complete. It is the one short hour in which we as Christians are called upon to watch with Him. And we can do it best not by engaging in theological disputes, still less by ignorantly rejecting the genuine results of historical or scientific research, or by trying vainly to smother the flame of free inquiry, but by more maintaining our Christian principles unshaken, by offering to men the sweet apology of a holy and self-devoted life, by making them feel that with us at least religion shall be a reality and not a form. Christianity is not a system of beliefs, but a life, a new life, in the world. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The thoughtfulness, therefore, and patience and self-devotion of our daily work may become the best apology for the Christian faith; for the new life that is thus lived in the spirit of Christ is an argument which men can neither answer nor ignore.—*S. A. Alexander.*

Ver. 38. *The nature and kinds of sins of infirmity.*—One can scarce acquit the disciples of some degree of negligence and want of respect. But our Lord was pleased to put the mildest and most candid construction possible upon it. The night was far spent; sleep stole upon them unawares; and they were naturally slow and heavy, not apprehending how much depended upon that critical juncture. They intended no affront or disrespect to their Lord: they had a true and real, only not so lively and vigorous a concern for Him as they ought to have had; their spirit truly was willing, and they meant well; but yet, for want of quicker sentiments, they failed in the performance. It was natural infirmity which prevailed over their resolutions, which overpowered their very hearty and honest but languid endeavours.

1. *What sins are properly sins of infirmity.* Their general nature is briefly described thus: that they are rather weak than wilful, having much more of frailty than of wilfulness in them. Something of wilfulness they must have, otherwise they could not be imputed as sins. But as the degree of wilfulness is small in comparison, and the frailty so much the greater, they have therefore their denomination from their most prevailing ingredient, and so are called sins of infirmity. They are a kind of slips, failings, or deviations, issuing from an honest and good heart, and carrying no malice prepenze, no premeditated guile, no ill meaning in them—harmless almost as to the matter of them, and without any bad design. They are owing either to inadvertency, forgetfulness, surprise, strength of passion, or to the suddenness and violence of an unlooked-for temptation. 1. I begin with such as have respect to the inward thought. And here we are liable to offend two ways—either in not thinking as we ought to think, or in thinking as we ought not. Human frailty is too often and too sadly felt in what concerns the government of the thoughts. Who is there that does not often find distraction and wanderings and deadness at his prayers, private or public—but public more especially, as we there meet with more objects to divert the eyes and to turn off the attention? This kind of non-attention or absence of thought in religious exercises, so far as it is a sin (for it is not so always), is, generally speaking, a sin of infirmity, and no more. And it is then only to be reckoned among wilful sins, when a man makes a habit of it, and slothfully submits to it, without striving against it; or when it carries some contempt of the service with it, arising from some vicious principle of the mind. Besides the sin of infirmity now mentioned, I may

name some others reducible to the same head,—such as the not thinking often enough or highly enough of God and His good providence; not having Him constantly in our thoughts, nor setting Him before our eyes; not attending to His calls, not regarding His judgments, nor being duly thankful for His mercies, etc. To these we may add, the not thinking how to lay hold of and to improve any opportunities we meet with of doing good in the world; and this through dullness, through inadvertency, or forgetfulness: for if we wilfully and designedly let slip the golden opportunity offered us, and despise the invitation, the sin is then wilful, and the offence presumptuous. Among sins of infirmity belonging to this head may be reckoned some kinds of unbelief, as both belief and unbelief respect the inward thoughts of the heart. Want of faith or trust in God's words or His promises in some timorous minds may justly pass for a sin of infirmity. They despond and sink down in the day of adversity more than becomes them to do, as if they had forgot that the very hairs of their heads are all numbered, or as if they had never read that not so much as a sparrow falleth to the ground but by the order or with the permission of an All-knowing God. Hitherto I have been considering such sins of infirmity as respect the inward thoughts, in such cases wherein we do not think as we ought to think. There is another branch of the same head, which is the thinking as we ought not. The former is a sin of omission only, this of commission, both resting in the mind. When we are thinking of this world only, suppose in prayer-time or sermon-time, instead of thinking of a better, as most of us are apt to do—this, we hope, may pass for a sin of infirmity, if not chosen by us, nor designedly indulged. Sometimes profane, blasphemous thoughts will rise up in men's minds; but if they be checked as soon as observed, and are not consented to, they are at most no more than sins of infirmity, owing generally to bodily indispositions. The same I say even of unchaste or malicious thoughts, if they are only short and transient, which abide not, which do not gain our consent, but are condemned by us as soon as perceived; they are then either sins of infirmity only, or not sins at all. For what the will or choice has no hand in is not imputable to us as a fault; it may be our misfortune. Too much warmth and eagerness, in some instances, is a sin of infirmity. Such, I suppose, was Peter's eagerness, when he drew his sword, without staying for his Lord's commission, and smote off a servant's ear. To this head I may refer credulity or over-hasty belief, as being often a sin of infirmity and pertaining only to the mind. To the same head may be referred over-great carefulness or anxiety in respect of worldly things. Martha, a very good woman in the main, was yet careful and cumbered about many things more than she should have been; and she received a gentle rebuke for it from our Blessed Lord. 2. Many are our sins of infirmity in speech. Our greatest comfort is that several of them may pass for frailties only; and happy will it be for us if we go no farther. I am persuaded that even Peter's denial of his Lord was rather weak than wilful; he was surprised into it, had forgot himself, and had not yet time to recollect. I should be willing to hope that hasty, heedless swearing, or taking God's name in vain, in those who have unhappily got a habit of it from their childhood, may be but a sin of infirmity for some time; but to such as perceive it, and continue it, and use not all proper means and care to get the better of it, and to break the evil habit, to them it is wilful and deadly sin. Telling of lies I do not reckon among the sins of infirmity. It is, generally at least, a voluntary chosen thing. But varying a little from strict truth, or adding to it, as is sometimes done, undesignedly, hastily, forgetfully, in the making a report, if it be in things of slight consequence, that may be numbered among human frailties. Angry and passionate speeches may mostly fall under the head of infirmities; but



bitter invectives, and irritating, injurious reflexions, made in cold blood, made deliberately, are without excuse. It would be endless to enumerate all the offences of the tongue which men are liable to. It is a difficult matter to talk much and well. Great talkers offend often, and they who say the least are generally the most innocent. Yet there may be a fault sometimes in being too reserved, shy, and silent—as when a man neglects to exhort or reprove his neighbour as occasions offer, or when he can patiently sit by and hear the name of God dishonoured or an innocent absent man abused without opening his mouth in defence of either. Such reservedness, in some cases, may rise no higher than a sin of infirmity; but for the most part we may more justly call it a wilful neglect, betraying meanness of spirit at least, or something worse.

3. I come now to the most material article of all, which concerns our outward actions. And here also we may offend two ways—either as neglecting to do what we ought, or doing what we ought not. Sins of infirmity are mostly seen in our manifold omissions and neglects, either forgetting what duties are incumbent upon us or performing them but in part. Hard would be our circumstances were we to give a strict account of all our omissions, or if much the greater part of them were not kindly overlooked by an All-merciful God, as pitiable frailties. Yet let not any man set light by omissions. Wilful omissions of known duties are wilful and presumptuous sins; and there are some kinds of omissions which will be always charged as wilful, and will be enough to exclude us from the kingdom of heaven, particularly if we omit or neglect to worship God or do good to man as our opportunities and abilities permit. I come next to speak of sins of commission, the doing what we ought not to do. Sins of this kind are mostly wilful; but some there are which may be justly looked upon as sins of infirmity. Drunkenness in righteous Noah, once only, might be a sin of infirmity. He was not aware of the effects of wine; he had not till then had experience of it; he was overtaken unawares, and surprised into it. I know not whether the like favourable excuse may not be admitted for others who may once unhappily fall into the like excess unawares. But, generally speaking, as the world now stands, a man can scarce be surprised into such excess or overtaken without his fault. Some have been weak enough to plead human frailty even for crying and scandalous sins, such as fornication or adultery or other sinful lusts. But all such pretences are vain. Sins of that kind never are, never can be, committed without great degrees of wilfulness. There are some other kinds of sins for which human infirmity is sometimes pleaded, and with very little reason—acts of hostility, assaults, beating, striking, wounding, and the like. Good men run sometimes into excessive warmth and zeal in the discharge of a duty or execution of an office. They may be guilty of indiscreet rigours, and push things too far—may be so afraid of not doing enough that they will even overdo, and be too officious or too severe, exceeding the bounds of Christian prudence, and doing hurt when they intended good. These and other the like indiscretions of good men are properly sins of infirmity, owing to inadvertency or surprise or to some natural weakness adhering to their particular temper, complexion, and constitution.

**II. How far our spiritual state or condition is affected by the sins of this kind.**—They do not exclude a man from the kingdom of heaven; they do not put him out of a state of grace, or out of favour with Almighty God. This may be proved several ways, both from Scripture texts and from the reason of the thing itself. 1. There are two or three special texts of Scripture which number up and recite such particular sins as will most certainly, if not repented of, exclude the offenders from the kingdom of heaven (see 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. v. 19-21; Matt. xxv. 41-43). Sins of mere infirmity are not the sins which either St. Paul or our Blessed Lord refer to as excluding men from

the kingdom of heaven. They are quite of another kind from those now mentioned; and therefore they do not exclude the person from a state of grace, but are consistent with the love of God and the love of one's neighbour, and so are not mortal or damning sins. They are the spots of God's children, such as the best of men are not entirely free from, though they are not imputed to them. 2. There is the greatest reason and equity imaginable here shewn in making such distinctions between sins of infirmity and deliberate sins; because this is estimating of men according to their sincerity, and according to the turn of their hearts, of which God alone is the unerring Judge, and which He has chiefly respect to; because indeed the heart is the principal thing—the mind is the man.

III. **What kind of conduct or management on our part is prudent or proper in regard to them.**—1. It concerns us to repent of them, that is, to express our sorrow and contrition for them, and to humble ourselves before God on the account of them. That they are sins is supposed, though not wilful or deliberate sins; and as they are sins, they will stand in need of pardon; and if they need pardon, they will also require repentance, which is the condition on which pardon is promised, and by means of which it will be given. But then the question is, "What kind of repentance?" First, a general repentance may suffice. We need not, we cannot be particular in all our sins of infirmity. Who can tell how oft he offendeth in this kind? We are not aware perhaps of one half or a tenth part of our failures, and therefore cannot particularly repent of them. And even those which we have been aware of, while fresh and new, yet easily slip out of our memories; and the very number of them, as they happen daily or hourly, is much too great to be distinctly considered or retained. But there is a farther difference between the repentance proper to wilful sins and the repentance required for human frailties. A man must not be content merely to confess and to declare his sorrow for wilful sins, but he must renounce and forsake them, and never rest satisfied till he has divested himself of them. But as to sins of infirmity the case is different. They are such as a good man may be content to live with and die with, and that because he never can entirely remove them from him. They are inseparable from flesh and blood, are interwoven into our very frame, and are as natural and necessary, in some degree at least, as it is to be weak or frail, unthinking or unobserving; or as it is to be liable to forgetfulness, fatigue, weariness, and the like. 2. We should farther add our devout prayers to God, to make us every day less and less liable to them, and not to impute them. The greater perfection we attain to, the more secure are we against falling back; and not only so, but we thereby become qualified for a higher and nobler reward. 3. We must use our best endeavours along with our prayers, to guard as much as possibly we can even against those smaller sins, lest they should lead to greater.—*Archdeacon Waterland.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 32. *Retirement for prayer.*—An afflicted heart ought to shut itself up from men by retirement, and to open itself to God by prayer. Christ, as the Good Shepherd, does that first Himself which He enjoins His sheep to do, preventing temptations by

prayer. He prays retired, not out of any necessity, but both out of obedience to His Father, who had prescribed this to Him as well as all the rest, and out of love towards us, whom He would instruct, edify, and redeem by this means.—*P. Quesnel.*

Vers. 33-36. *Christ's agony in Gethsemane* was consistent with—

1. The affection of God towards Him. He suffered as the Substitute of guilty man (2 Cor. v. 21)—according to the Divine plan (John v. 22)—with satisfaction to God (John x. 17).
2. Voluntary consecration. (1) Christ was equal with God, and therefore could not be coerced. (2) Christ was loved by God, and therefore would not be coerced. (3) Christ was devoted to God, and therefore needed not to be coerced. It was not the nails but His love that bound Him to the Cross. He died when He could have lived.
3. Purity of character. He did not suffer because He sinned. (1) Men testified to His purity. Judas, Pilate, Peter. (2) Fiends testified to His purity. "Holy One of God." (3) God testified to His purity. "Well pleased."
4. Consciousness of power to overcome opposition. "The prince of this world shall be cast out." "And I, if I be lifted up," etc. "It is finished." (1) He was fully conscious of the arduousness of His work. (2) He experienced the terrible penalties of His work. (3) He never shrank from the consequences of His work. (4) He finally accomplished the design of His work.—*B. D. Johns.*

*Christ's agony of soul on account of sin.*—He was, so to speak, mentally robing Himself for the great sacrifice; He was robing, He was folding round His sinless manhood, He was laying upon a sinless soul the sins of a guilty world. To us, indeed, the burden of sin is as natural almost as the clothes we wear; it sits on us as lightly, and for long tracks of life, it may be, we think nothing at all about it; but to Him the touch which we take so easily was an agony even in its lightest form. And when we consider the weight and magnitude, the subtle penetrating poison, the dreadful importunity of the burden which He willed to bear, when we think of that festering accumulation of ages, the sins of the men before the Flood, the sins of Egypt and of Babylon, the sins of Sodom,

of Moab, of Philistia, of Tyre, the sins of Imperial Rome, of barbarous heathendom, and then, worse than these, the sins of Israel—sins of disobedience and stubbornness, sins of scorn and ingratitude, sins of cruelty and hypocrisy—when we think of all that was suggested to the mind of the Son of David as He looked up from the mount there in Gethsemane, and beheld in the moonlight the eastern wall of the city which was rejecting Him, on the hill over against the very spot where He knelt—when we recall that which touches us more nearly, the sins of redeemed Christendom, and Christian Churches, of Christian nations, of individual Christians—your sins and mine, our sins against light and knowledge, our sins against grace, our sins against merciful warnings and wholesome fears, all of them most intimately present to Him,—can we wonder that His bodily nature gave way, that His passion seemed to have been upon Him before its time, and that His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground?—*Canon Liddon.*

*Christ in Gethsemane an example to us.*—It is not at all times that even good Christians can enter into the meaning of this solemn scene; but there are mental trials which interpret it to us, and which, in turn, are by us, if we will, transfigured into heavenly blessings. 1. There is the inward conflict which often precedes our undertaking hard or unwelcome duty or sacrifice; there is no doubt of the obligation, and the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The eye measures the effort which is required, the length and degree of endurance which must be attempted ere the work is really done; and as the eye traverses the field before it, all the quick sensibilities of feeling start up and rehearse their past by anticipation, and cling to and clog and embarrass the will—the will already, perhaps, sufficiently sluggish or reluctant—that they may hold it back from the road of duty. Ah! struggles such as this between



inclination and duty may be at times sorrow for the soul even unto death. When they come on you, brace yourselves by watching, by praying with Jesus in Gethsemane, that you may learn to say after Him, "Not my will but Thine be done." 2. Then there are forms of doubt respecting God's goodness and providence which are a great trouble at times to excellent Christians. There are, of course, obvious sources of relief for this calamity—wise books, thoughtful friends; but the best remedy is to kneel in spirit side by side with Jesus in Gethsemane. It is a prayer such as was His prayer, which struggles on under a darkened heaven into the light beyond. 3. And then, quite distinct from doubt, there is a desolateness of the soul, which, for long intervals of time, sometimes makes God's service distasteful even to the best Christians. They who experience it can but kneel in their Gethsemane with that oft-repeated prayer, "Oh, my Father, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt." 4. Lastly, there is the approach of death, which may come upon us suddenly as a thief in the night, but may be also ushered in, as it generally is, by a preface of weakening health and lingering sickness. "I was sitting at luncheon," said one of the best of Christ's servants in this generation, "and I suddenly felt as I never did before. I felt that something had given way. I knew what it meant, what it must mean. I went up into my room; I prayed God that He would enable me to bear what I knew was before me, and would at the last receive me, for His dear Son's sake." It was the close of a life as bright as it was beautiful, only there was much to leave behind, warm and affectionate friends, and an abundance of those highest satisfactions which come with constant and unselfish occupation; but it was the summons to another world, and, as such, it was obeyed. Death is awful, and that first gaze at the break up of all that

we have hitherto called life must ever have about it a touch of agony; and yet if Jesus in Gethsemane is our Shepherd, surely we should lack nothing. "Yea, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we shall fear no evil," for He is with us who has gone before, His rod and His staff comfort us.—*Ibid.*

*Comfort to us from Christ's agony.*—In our reverential contemplation of Christ's human perfections we are apt to overlook the important fact that they were not the result even of His original human nature left to itself, but as it was influenced and perfected by the same holy comfort which He has imparted to all His disciples. "He was made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted." The tears which fell on the grave of Lazarus flowed from the same source out of which in unregenerate man springs weak repining or sullen discontent; his unwearied industry in "doing good" was but that which the miser or the ambitious man employs to other ends; and the calm fortitude with which He endured insult, pain, and death was formed out of the very same qualities which, ungoverned and misdirected, brought the guilty robber to a cross by His side. The materials were all human and our own, the workmanship alone Divine. And is the Lord's arm shortened? Will not the same God that worketh in us also enable us like Him perfectly to will and to do of His good pleasure, if only the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus? It is true, indeed, that to us the Holy Spirit is given by measure; still that measure is a measure of grace sufficient for us.—*S. Hinds.*

*Christ's craving for sympathy.*—Tender touch of nature to make Him with the whole world kin. In any great trial this craving of companionship, if no more; if no hand can help nor voice can soothe, yet a motionless, silent companionship; who is a stranger to the desire? It begins in childhood, when two infants will walk hand in

hand "in the dark" where neither would go alone. Do these two innocents calculate that the twain are more defensible against "the giant" than one? By no means. It is the embryo of that wordless hunger of the soul, developing as life broadens, and finding its most exalted manifestation in Gethsemane. Invalids, who have counted the strokes of midnight wakeful hours, conjured by the wall-flashes and flickers of dim lamps, and need no other service, cry out, "Father! Mother! Some one!" It is nothing, only to hear you answer that you are there. Then we sit by them, long and patiently, perhaps dozing disciple-like as we hold their hands, saying and doing nothing, but *being*—near them. Jesus knew, as the crisis approached, that the acme of sorrow must ever be met in solitude; but up to the outer vestibule of that solitude He brought the eight disciples, and to the last inner door He brought the three. Even when He must be alone, in conflict and victory, He yet emerges twice to feel the helpfulness of His beloved near Him. He wants our sympathy still in His warfare with sin on the earth. He who so wanted the society of men will have His own with Him where He is, at last and for ever.—*E. J. Haynes.*

Ver. 35. *Secret prayer.*—The prayer of Jesus Christ was secret. He had withdrawn Himself from His disciples. They were not able to bear the sight of such a conflict. Even at this distant period we read of it with painful emotions. The transactions of the soul with God demand secrecy. A deeper humiliation may become us before God than it would be proper for any about us to witness. We do well, therefore, to seek opportunities of retirement, and should reserve large portions of our time for the purpose of drawing nigh to God.—*O. A. Jeary.*

"*Fell on the ground.*"—With His face to the earth—a posture betokening far more abasement and earnestness than even kneeling. That the

Son of God should have prayed in such a posture teaches us the fearful darkness of that shadow of death which He had resolved to pass through on our account; that the Son of God should have prayed in such a posture teaches us that we must worship God with the worship of the body. What a reproof to those who would fain make a shew of prayer, sitting at ease, to see the Holy One of God prostrated on the ground!—*M. F. Sadler.*

Ver. 36. *Submission to the will of God.*—There is no Christian grace which we have oftener occasion to exercise than that of an humble and patient submission to the will of God. 1. There are few moments of our lives in which we are not either under the pressure of some evil which lies heavy upon our minds, or under the apprehension of some grievous calamity which hangs over our heads and is ready to fall down upon us. In both these cases an entire resignation to the good pleasure of God is necessary, that we should without repining bear whatever He hath been pleased to inflict, and that we should have our minds well prepared to endure whatever He in His infinite wisdom shall think expedient farther to lay upon us. 2. Those who have taken the greatest care to arm themselves against the time of conflict find it sometimes difficult enough to stand their ground and to come off conquerors in the day of battle; but those who have in their prosperous state made no provision against adversity, those who fall into the midst of troubles defenceless and unarmed, those who are then to learn the hard duty of submission when they are called to practise it, will be much more at a loss how to bear up against evils unforeseen and unprovided against, and how to demean themselves in the needful time of trouble. 3. The difficulties with which we are to encounter during our pilgrimage in this world are very many and very great, so many that we may not hope by any foresight to

escape them all, and some of them so great that without due preparation we cannot expect to be patient under them. Liable we are to be attacked with troubles of mind and with pains of body, with losses of our nearest and dearest friends, with the ruin of our estates, and with the blastings of our reputations: these we are obnoxious to in our own persons, and in the persons of those who are so closely tied to us by blood or by friendship, by affection or by interest, that what happens to them touches us as nearly and afflicts us as sensibly as what happens to ourselves. 4. Upon all these occasions which do so frequently occur, which are now, it is to be feared, present to many of us, and which to those who may think them at a very great distance may probably be much nearer than they imagine, submission to the will of God is a duty which we are called to exercise, and which therefore it concerns us to be well acquainted with and to be well prepared for.—*Bishop Smalbridge.*

"*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me,*" was the first thought that human frailty suggested even to our Blessed Saviour Himself; and therefore it cannot be blameworthy in us if upon the first hasty view of any great calamity ready to overtake us we do in the like manner desire and beg that we may escape it; but when we have time to consider and deliberate, we must bring our natural desires under a strict discipline, and curb them with the same restraint as Christ did: "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt."—*Ibid.*

*Christ's two wishes.*—Christ is not two Christs, but one; yet has He two wishes—a general wish, and a particular wish. His particular wish is to escape this suffering, His general wish that God's will be done. The one is the wish for His own sake, the other the wish for God's sake. The one is a temporary wish, the other an enduring wish. If Christ knew not before He prayed what was possible and what impossible, how

much less likely is it that we should know?—*Jas. Lonsdale.*

*Obedience learnt by suffering.*—No one has ever learned obedience to the will of God, and joy in that obedience, except through suffering. He who endures because he must suffers only as a servant. He who endures only because he hopes to gain something by it is not a Christian at all. Christ's submission is a lesson of utter unselfishness. "God has good ends in view for you," we say, to console the sufferer. But God had ends in view in Christ's sufferings, not for His Son, but for His Son's enemies. He only has learned to suffer as a son who has found that the will of God is sweet even when it involves what is in itself bitter. To suffer gladly because it is our Father's will is to have learned obedience. When that is learned, the Christian need not wait for great afflictions, but finds in every little trial, every disappointment, each daily cross and care, a discipline to bring him into richer revelations of sonship with God.

Ver. 37. "*Couldst not thou watch one hour?*"—Probably many of us would be discomposed by an arithmetical estimate of our communion with God. It might reveal to us the secret of much of our apathy in prayer, because it might disclose how little we desire to be alone with God. We might learn from such a computation that Augustine's idea of prayer as "the measure of love" is not very flattering to us. We do not grudge time given to a privilege which we love. Why should we expect to enjoy a duty which we have no time to enjoy? Do we enjoy anything which we do in a hurry? Enjoyment presupposes something of mental leisure. How often do we say of a pleasure, "I wanted more time to enjoy it to my heart's content." But of all employments none can be more dependent on "time for it" than stated prayer. Fugitive acts of devotion, to be of high value, must be sustained by other



approaches to God, deliberate, pre-meditated, regular, which shall be to those acts like the abutments of a suspension bridge to the arch that spans the stream. It will never do to be in desperate haste in laying such foundations. This thoughtful duty, this spiritual privilege, this foretaste of incorporeal life, this communion with an unseen Friend—can you expect to enjoy it as you would a repartee or a dance?—“*The Still Hour.*”

Ver. 38. *Watching and prayer.*—If we must watch and pray, to prevent and withstand temptation, let us not be surprised that so many enter into it and fall thereby: it is for no other reason but because there are very few who watch and pray in that manner and with that constancy which they ought. Prayer is necessary in order to watch, and watchfulness in order to pray; and both the one and the other are so to secure us from temptation. Peter was deficient in vigilance because he was so in prayer; and through the neglect of both he fell, being overcome by the fear of death and the love of life.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 39. *The simplicity and plainness of Christ in His prayers* is an important lesson, and of great use and advantage. A Christian who prays to God is not an orator who would persuade by his eloquence, but a beggar who would move to compassion by his poverty and humility. These

speak plainly and without ornament. And Jesus speaks thus to God because He has clothed Himself with our humility and poverty.—*Ibid.*

*Trouble*—great, searching, overwhelming trouble—has no varied diction. Sorrow has but few words. These are syllabled by lips that are pale and quivering. There is a terrible concentration in grief. The soul that groans under its pressure is swathed in darkness, even amid the splendour of high noon. The light is gone. The stars glitter no more. The voices of the loving are unheard. Oh the frightful abstraction of woe!—*Dean Lefroy.*

Vers. 41, 42. *The past and the future.*—He had warned the disciples in vain to watch and pray, and now it was too late for that—all was over; the opportunity had slipped away from them and was buried in the past, so that, as far as this duty went, they might sleep on, for it must remain for ever undone. But then He turned away at once from this contemplation of the unchangeable, and pointing onward to present duty He said, “Rise, let us be going.” The one thing was beyond their control, and though they might mourn they could not alter it; there would be no answer to their endeavours but “Too late,” so that it behoved them now to turn at once to the courses which were still open.—*J. Percival, LL.D.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 43—52.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxvi. 47-56; LUKE xxii. 47-53; JOHN xviii. 1-11.)

*The captive Christ and the circle round Him.* A comparison of the first three Gospels in this section shews a degree of similarity, often verbal, which is best accounted for by supposing that a common (oral) “gospel,” which had become traditionally fixed by frequent and long repetition, underlies them all. Mark’s account is briefest, and grasps with sure instinct the essential points; but, even in his brevity, he pauses to tell of the young man who so nearly shared the Lord’s apprehension. The canvas is narrow and crowded; but we may see unity in the picture, if we regard as the central fact the sacrilegious seizure of Jesus, and the other incidents and persons as grouped round it and Him, and reflecting various moods of men’s feelings towards Him.

**I. The avowed and hypocritical enemies of Incarnate Love.**—Again we have Mark's favourite "straightway," so frequent in the beginning of the Gospel, and occurring twice here, vividly painting both the sudden inburst of the crowd which interrupted Christ's words and broke the holy silence of the garden, and Judas' swift kiss. The passionless narrative tells the criminal and his crime with unsparing, unmoved tones, which have caught some echo beforehand of the Judge's voice. To name the sinner, and to state without cloak or periphrasis what his deed really was, is condemnation enough. Which of us could stand it? Judas was foremost of the crowd. That the black depths of his spirit were agitated is plain from two things—the quick kiss, and the nauseous repetition of it. "Straightway . . . he kissed Him much." Probably the swiftness and vehemence, so graphically expressed by these two touches, were due not only to fear lest Christ should escape, and to hypocrisy over-acting its part, but reveal a struggle with conscience and ancient affection, and a fierce determination to do the thing and have it over. The very extravagances of evil betray the divided and stormy spirit of the doer. That traitor's kiss has become a symbol for all treachery cloaked in the garb of affection. Its lessons and warnings are obvious; but this other may be added—that such audacity and nauseousness of hypocrisy is not reached at a leap, but presupposes long underground tunnels of insincere discipleship, through which a man has burrowed, unseen by others, and perhaps unsuspected by himself. Much hypocrisy of the unconscious sort precedes the deliberate and conscious. How much less criminal and disgusting was the rude crowd at Judas' heels! Most of them were mere passive tools. Half-ignorant hatred, which had had ample opportunities of becoming knowledge and love, offended formalism, blind obedience to ecclesiastical superiors, the dislike of goodness—these impelled the rabble who burst into the Garden of Gethsemane.

**II. Incarnate Love bound and patient.**—"They laid hands on Him." That was the first stage in outrage—the quick stretching of many hands to secure the unresisting Prisoner. They "took Him," or, as perhaps we might better render, "They held Him fast," as would have been done with any prisoner. Surely the quietest way of telling that stupendous fact is the best! It is easy to exclaim, and, after the fashion of some popular writers of Lives of Christ, to paint fancy pictures. It is better to be sparing of words, like Mark, and silently to meditate on the patient long-suffering of the love which submitted to these indignities, and on the blindness which had no welcome but this for God manifest in the flesh. Both are in full operation to-day, and the germs of the latter are in us all. Mark confines himself to that one of Christ's sayings which sets in the clearest light His innocence and meek submissiveness. With all its calmness and patience, it is majestic and authoritative, and sounds as if spoken from a height far above the hubbub. Its question is not only an assertion of His innocence, and therefore of His captors' guilt, but also declares the impotence of force as against Him: "Swords and staves to take Me!" All that parade of arms was out of place, for He was no evil-doer; needless, for He did not resist; and powerless, unless He chose to let them prevail. The second clause of Christ's remonstrance appeals to their knowledge of Him and His words, and to their attitude towards Him. He would have them ask, "Why this change in us, since He is the same?" Did He deserve to be hailed as King a few short hours ago? How, then, before the palm branches are withered, can He deserve rude hands? The third clause rises beyond all notice of the human agents, and soars to the Divine purpose which wrought itself out through them. That Divine purpose does not make them guiltless, but it makes Jesus submissive. We, too, should train ourselves to see the hand that moves the pieces and to make God's will our will, as becomes sons. Then Christ's calm will be ours,

and, ceasing from self and conscious of God everywhere and yielding our wills, which are the self of ourselves, to Him, we shall enter into rest.

III. **Rash love defending its Lord with wrong weapons.**—Peter may have felt that he must do something to vindicate his recent boasting, and, with his usual headlong haste, stops neither to ask what good his sword is likely to do, nor to pick his man and take deliberate aim at him. If swords were to be used, they should do something more effectual than hacking off a poor servant's ear. Christ and His cause are to be defended by other weapons. Christian heroism endures, and does not smite. Not only swords, but bitter words, which wound worse than they, are forbidden to Christ's soldier. We are ever being tempted to fight Christ's battles with the world's weapons; and many a "defender of the faith" in later days, perhaps even in this very enlightened day, has repeated Peter's fault with less excuse than he, and with very little of either his courage or his love.

IV. **Cowardly love forsaking its Lord.**—"They all forsook Him, and fled." And who will venture to say that he would not have done so too? The tree that can stand such a blast must have deep roots. Their flight may teach us to place little reliance on our emotions, however genuine and deep, and to look for the security of our continual adherence to Christ—not to our fluctuating feelings, but to His steadfast love.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Vers. 51, 52. *The young man in the linen cloth.*—As Jesus was being led a prisoner through the streets of Jerusalem to the palace of Caiaphas, a certain youth, awakened probably by the uproar they made, sprang from his bed, seized the first wrapper that came to hand, and, hastily folding himself in it, ran out into the moonlight, to learn the cause of the disturbance. As he ran after and caught up the retiring group of officers, he saw they had a prisoner in their midst, and in the prisoner he recognised Jesus of Nazareth, the rabbi to whom no doubt he had listened with delight as He taught in the Temple and in the streets; for, we are told, he was following Him, not simply following the crowd. In Him his interest is so great, so obvious, that it compels him to remonstrate with the officers who had arrested Him, or to address words of comfort and hope to their Prisoner. For the officers, irritated by his too obvious sympathy with Jesus, lay hold upon him, and are about to arrest him as a follower of the Galilean Rabbi. But for this the young man is not prepared. He slips out of the linen robe, which they have grasped, and runs back, naked, to the house from which but a few moments before he had run out.

I. In all probability the young man was St. Mark himself, the writer of this Gospel. 1. At least one other of the Evangelists, St. John, when he has to speak of himself, does not name himself, but speaks of himself in the indefinite way in which "a certain young man" is here introduced to us. So that, if the young man were Mark, it might well be that he would not name himself, but give some such indefinite allusion to himself as is here employed. 2. What is there in this incident to warrant, or even to account for, its insertion into the narrative, unless it be a personal interest? It is mentioned in no one of the other Gospels. It has no direct bearing on the story of Christ's arrest and trial. If Mark himself was the young man that sprang up in the dead of night, and saw Jesus led by the officers to be tried by the high priest, we can understand with what profound interest he would afterward recall every detail of that incident, and how gladly, when he wrote his Gospel, he would connect himself, though in the most modest and unobtrusive way, with that supreme crisis in the history of his Lord and ours. Whereas, on any other hypothesis, supposing the young man to have been any one but himself, we can see no sufficient reason why he should pause to narrate so trifling an event. 3. The minute details crowded into this



brief sentence look as if they could only be drawn from personal recollection. As we read it, if at least we read with an alert imagination, we can see the young man lying on his pallet; we can hear the brawl in the street that awakes him; we see him start up and snatch at the first covering that comes to hand, cast it hastily about him, run out into the moonlit street, recognise Jesus, and interfere impulsively with the officers in the execution of their duty; we see him roused to a sense of his danger as they lay rough hands upon him, and run away, leaving the costly linen robe in their hands. I have sometimes wondered whether there was any prophetic symbolism in the seeming accident that the young man should wrap himself in a *sindon*. The Lord Jesus was on His way to the Cross and the grave, though as yet no official sentence had been pronounced against Him. Was this fine linen web, this costly Indian fabric, which came so strangely and unexpectedly into the hands of His guard, an omen of what that sentence would be? Any Jew would have set the web aside to be a winding-sheet. Is the winding-sheet brought into the sacred narrative to indicate that Jesus was now about to die? 4. The mother of Mark, as we learn from Acts xii. 12, had a house in Jerusalem; and it has been generally held that St. Mark was a native of this city, and dwelt in it until he became a missionary of the Cross: so that, unlike most of the disciples and friends of Jesus, he would be living in Jerusalem, and perhaps in that very street through which Jesus was led on the night of His betrayal. From the fact, moreover, that Mark's mother had a house of her own in the metropolis, and that this house was spacious enough to be the habitual resort of the primitive Church, we infer that she was a woman of some wealth and consideration—a woman, therefore, in whose house a costly Indian fabric, such as the young man cast about him, might well lie ready to his hand. 5. The impulsive character of this young man—soon hot, soon cold, ready to dare all risks at one moment that he may follow Jesus, and ready at the next moment to abandon his sole and costly garment that he may escape the hands of the officers—accords entirely with what we know of the character of Mark as depicted by St. Luke.

II. Why was this incident recorded? What is there in it for us?—1. It teaches us at least this lesson: that Christ has room in His service, and a discipline, for warm and impulsive natures; that even for these He can find some duty to discharge, some function to fulfil. St. Mark was a man of this kind—a man who was apt to begin to build without counting the cost. He was of an eager, sensitive, and impressible temperament, as the graphic touches which abound in his Gospel indicate; but, like most persons of this sensitive, impulsive temperament, he was fickle and unsteadfast. Probably his imagination was very keen and active, as in such cases it often is, and painted the beauty and heroism of a certain line of conduct very brightly, but painted just as darkly the terrors of the conflict which to pursue such a line of conduct would involve. And thus he would be easily moved to undertake enterprises which he was not strong enough to carry through. Even when he had grown older and was an avowed servant of Christ, Mark betrayed the same infirmity, the same unsteadfast poise of spirit between conflicting impulses, the same sensitive apprehension of the lions that lurk in the path of devotion to any great cause. He started with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, just as he rose from his bed to follow Christ to the hall of judgment through the streets of Jerusalem; but just as he forsook Christ when the officers laid their rude grasp on Him, so also he abandoned Paul and Barnabas before their work was well begun (Acts xiii. 13). His motive for abandoning them was the very motive which led him to abandon Christ—the fear of harm and loss. Paul and Barnabas were about to plunge into the wild mountains of Asia Minor, to encounter “perils of rivers and perils of robbers” among the

lawless and marauding highland clans. Mark did not like the prospect. And so, just as they were about to face their gravest perils, and to win their greatest successes, he forsook them—*deserted* them, as St. Paul indignantly maintained—and returned to his mother's comfortable house in Jerusalem. Yet even for this impulsive and inconstant man there was not only room but an appropriate discipline in the service of Christ. In his later epistles St. Paul speaks of Mark as "a fellow-worker in the kingdom of God," and as "a comfort to himself"; and in his very last letter he describes him as being "profitable to him in the ministry." We may be sure, therefore, that this man, once so impulsive, so unreliable, so driven by contrary winds and tossed, became, by the teaching and grace of Christ, a brave and single-hearted servant of the Lord whose service he had more than once abandoned. 2. As we recall the past, we cannot but see that our lives have not flowed on in a single steady current to an eternal goal; that they have been broken into many, and even into adverse, currents, some flowing in one direction, some in another, most of them losing themselves in mere marshes and bogs, instead of carrying health and fertility along their appointed course. We are conscious that unity has been wanting to our lives, so that they will not have left one, and that a strong and good, impression on the world, but many broken and even contradictory impressions. Our influence, as we readily acknowledge, has not been wholly good; it has not always helped to foster all the good growths springing up around us; it has told almost as often and as much for evil as for good. We feel that, like St. Mark, we have again and again abandoned the Master we profess and wish to serve. And at times we lose all hope of ever reaching that constant mind, that settled and steadfast loyalty to Him, that entire devotion to His service, which yet we long to reach, without which, should we fail to reach it, we are sure that we cannot know any true happiness or peace. At such times as these it will give us new heart to remember that even for Mark there was reserved a place in the service of Christ, and a discipline which enabled him to fill that place. For the Master will deal with us as He dealt with him. If we have any true love for Him, any sincere desire to live to Him, He will teach us by our very errors, and train us by our very failures, and make our dissatisfaction with ourselves a spur to a more constant and cheerful obedience.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 43. *Who are like Judas to-day?*—Those who know their duty, feel the power of the truth, see the worth of Christ, recognise the privilege of the Christian life, and yet turn their back on all this and give themselves up as the slaves of their passions. Knowing perfectly the wrong they do, they do not hesitate to injure Christ for what they consider their advantage.

*A picture of apostates.*—We see here but too lively a picture of apostates, who have no sooner deserted from the Church but they persecute it, put themselves at the head of conspiracies against the higher powers, and breathe

nothing but violence, rebellion, and treason.—*P. Quésnel.*

Vers. 44, 45. *The kiss of treachery.*—The kiss was a customary expression of mingled affection and reverence on the part of the disciples when they met their Master. To suppose that Judas deliberately selected an action which was as remote as possible from his then true feelings is an unnecessary supposition. It is more true to human nature to suppose that he endeavoured to appease whatever there may have been in the way of lingering protest in his conscience by an act of formal

reverence that was dictated to him by long habit, and that served to veil from himself the full enormity of his crime at the moment of his doing it. In like manner the brigands in the south of Europe have been known to accompany deeds of thefts and deeds of blood with previous ejaculations whether of piety or superstition, and cases have been heard farther north of pickpockets when the thief and his victim have been kneeling side by side in a church or sitting side by side in a meeting-house. In these instances religion may be employed not simply as a blind to an immoral act, but as a sort of salve to a protesting conscience. The passing thrill of emotion seems to do something towards reducing the magnitude of the crime which accompanies it. The case of Judas has become a proverb for all those proceedings whereby, under the semblance of outward reverence for religion or of devotion to its interests, its substance or its reality is betrayed.—*Canon Liddon.*

*The hardihood of evil.*—Note: 1. The malignant influence of an evil leader. 2. The awful change in Judas. He might have been the leader of the twelve, of the holy company of disciples, and sinks to be the leader of this vile crew. 3. The hardihood of evil in kissing Christ: such resolute effrontery, such presumptuous invasion of that face before which earth and heaven shall flee away! 4. The infinite meekness of Christ. He requires us to endure the blow of an enemy. He endures the loathsome kiss. 5. As their number betrayed their sense of Christ's greatness, so this kiss proclaims Him worthy of allegiance and of love. 6. The worst opponents of Christ are still those who betray with a kiss—such as those who oppose His claims while affecting to revere His character, and deny His Saviourship while acknowledging the excellence of His doctrine. 7. The depravity of human nature. For these men are our brothers. There is no sermon on the

need of repentance can be so convicting as this narrative of what human nature has actually done.—*R. Glover.*

Ver. 47. *Worldly weapons.*—In relation to the advancement of the Church of Christ, worldly views, a worldly temper, worldly methods, efforts to secularise in order to popularise, however well meaning, are but the swinging of swords, which, if unchecked, would nullify Scripture and bar the way of life to men. There is a law in our members warring against the law of our minds. As opportunity offers it eagerly puts a sword in our hands and commands the use of it. We obey too often, to our own and others' spiritual injury and the hindrance of the sacred cause we represent and would help.—*Wm. M. Campbell.*

Ver. 50. *A bad deed by good men.*—The apprehension of Christ in the garden was to the disciples a mystery. It confounded them. In their ignorance they were terrified, and deserted Christ. It was not want of love, but lack of courage. It was an eclipse, not an extinction, of their faith.

**I. The disciples deserted Christ after promising not to do so?—**1. They had promised after being warned. "Ye shall be offended because of Me," etc. Christ candidly spoke of suffering. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed." 2. They had promised independently of each other. "If all men," etc. "So said all His disciples." 3. They had promised whatever would be the result. "Go with Thee to prison," etc.

**II. The disciples deserted Christ when He was in difficulties.—**1. The instability of the best human friendship. 2. The terribleness of Christ's sufferings. 3. The necessity of Christians counting the cost.

**III. The disciples deserted Christ, though He suffered in their cause.—**This made them guilty of—1. Ingratitude. 2. Discouragement. 3. Cowardice.

**IV. The disciples deserted Christ, but He remained steadfast.—**1. The faithfulness of Christ. 2. The inde-



pendence of Christ. 3. The courage of Christ. 4. The forbearance of Christ.—*B. D. Johns.*

*Christ forsaken by His disciples.*—

**I. How weak is the resolution of fallen man!**—Man, as originally formed by God, was capable of carrying into execution whatever his judgment approved or his will decreed; but it is far otherwise with us in our present state. How earnest are many, when lying on a bed of sickness, to redeem their time; and how determined, if ever they should recover, to devote the remainder of their lives to God! Yet they are no sooner restored to health than they go back to their former habits and companions, and leave to a distant period the performance of their vows. It is thus also with many after an awakening discourse: they see how vain it is to render unto God a mere formal or hypocritical service, and they resolve that henceforth they will offer Him an undivided heart. But their hearts are not steadfast in the covenant which they make, and their lives are little else than a series of reformations and declensions without any solid improvement in the Divine life.

**II. What great evils are even good men capable of committing!**—What ingratitude were these disciples guilty of in forsaking their Lord, when their presence might perhaps be of most essential service to Him? The unbelief also which they manifested on this occasion was highly criminal. They had been repeatedly told by Jesus that, after His death and resurrection, He would meet them in Galilee. This was equal to a promise on His part that they should be preserved. Moreover, at the very time when He was apprehended, He said in their hearing, “If ye seek Me, let these go their way.” This ought to have been regarded by them as a certain pledge of their security. But so completely were they overcome by fear that they could not think of safety but in flight.

**III. How desirable is it to have just views of Jesus Christ!**—Our Lord

forewarned His disciples that their desertion of Him would originate in their misconception of His character and office: “All ye shall be offended in Me this night.” They had seen their Divine Master controlling the very elements themselves, from whence they had concluded Him to be the true Messiah. But now they behold Him bound and led away by an armed band, they begin to think that all their former notions were false, and that the expectations which they had founded on His numerous miracles were delusive. Jesus seemed to them now to be like Samson after his locks were cut: He was become weak as other men. Hence they could no longer repose any confidence in Him, but fled like sheep without a shepherd. And is it not thus with the ungodly? Wherefore do they despise Jesus, but because they know neither His power nor His grace?—*C. Simeon.*

Vers. 51, 52. *Impulse.*—**I. The excitement of impulse.**—1. In the best cause. (1) Associated with the best being. (2) Manifested in the best way. “Followed.”—Christ alone to lead. (3) Fired by the best spirit. Courage when all others fled. 2. By an anonymous person. (1) The youthful are the likeliest to be impulsive. Passions are strong; curiosity eager; ambition powerful. (2) Mere impulse is a very commonplace passion. 3. Abruptly displayed. (1) Thoughtless in regard to appearance. (2) Aimless in regard to design. (3) Useless in regard to service.

**II. The opposition to impulse.**—1. Association with Christ may entail danger. Needful to count the cost. 2. Impulsive natures need extraordinary prudence. 3. Those near to Christ most hated by the enemy.

**III. The collapse of impulse.**—1. Fear. (1) No true love to Christ. (2) Depended on His own strength. (3) No fear of God. (4) Love of life strong. 2. Desertion. Soon ripe—soon rotten. 3. Oblivion. Never heard of again.—*B. D. Johns.*

*Christ's care for His disciples.*—This accident, which seems to be of no consequence, serves to discover the power of Christ, and His great care and concern for His apostles. 1. He thereby admonishes Peter that he ought to fly from the occasion and not expose himself to temptation, these people having a design to seize all the disciples of our Lord. 2. He

by this discovers the same danger to the rest, and advises them likewise to flee. 3. He shews them that it was by His power that they escaped the danger. 4. That even that person who by their means is exposed thereto escapes from it by the appointment of Providence, and because He Himself would suffer alone.—*P. Quesnel.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 53—72.

(PARALLELS: MATT. XXVI. 57-75; LUKE XXII. 54-71; JOHN XVIII. 12-27.)

*Jesus before the Sanhedrin.*—The Reformer, who had detected and exposed the prevailing abuses of Jehovah's law; the Prophet, who had sternly rebuked the inconsistencies, hypocrisies, and vices of the degenerate men who sat in Moses' seat; the Son of David, who appeared as a mean carpenter's son of despised Nazareth; the King of the Jews, who came only as a Prince of Peace, whose servants would not fight against Roman dominion; the Messiah, who had not been anointed with oil of their choosing,—this Jesus was now in their power.

**I. The pretended trial.**—1. As the supreme court of judicature in Israel, the Sanhedrin sat in judgment upon Jesus. But the men who were here assembled as His judges had already conspired against Him as His foes, and had resolved to arraign Him before the Roman governor as His prosecutors. This was enough to stamp their proceedings with injustice. But in order to the complete justification of truth, and for the warning of future ages, their guilt must become more heinous and more evident. 2. They could not justify to their own people the arraignment of a Jew before a Roman tribunal, unless that Jew should first have been condemned and excommunicated by themselves as a breaker of the Mosaic law. Hence the necessity for this pretended trial. 3. It was hurried on with indecent haste, conducted in the dead of night, with the omission of many legal forms: false evidence had been prepared by the judges themselves. But as truth is always consistent, falsehood seldom or never, it pleased God to confute these perjured witnesses by their own words. At length the high priest, disconcerted by the palpable failure of his plot, and impatient to arrive at his foregone conclusion, resorts to the unusual and unjust expedient of convicting the Accused out of His own mouth (vers. 61-64).

**II. The evil principle which moved the Sanhedrin: party-spirit.**—1. The Sanhedrin had lost the power of life and death; its ancient privileges, curtailed under the Asmonean and Edomite dynasties, had been further diminished by the Roman emperors; and with power and privilege the dignity and influence of its members was all but gone. For the recovery of this influence, that is to say, for their own selfish aggrandisement, and not for the honour of God and the good of their country, these counsellors caballed, combined, conspired—formed a party, and acted together as a party. 2. At one time they had looked with hope to Jesus. They would have been glad to use Him as an instrument against the hated Romans, and when He had served their turn to fling away the lowly Nazarene as a broken tool. But Jesus would not join them. Nay, more, He unveiled their abuses, unmasked their hypocrisies, confuted their prettexts, baffled their devices, rebuked their sins. Therefore they regarded Him as an enemy, and agreed together to destroy Him. 3. Then was waged the warfare

of an unscrupulous and infuriated party against one obnoxious individual. Spies were employed to entangle him in His talk; snares were set; calumnies were circulated. But from His armour of proof all their shafts all harmless. At length the traitor Judas presents himself; the bribe is offered and accepted; hasty preparations are made; witnesses summoned; the arrest effected; the trial-scene performed under cover of night, with the cruel issue which had been predetermined and concerted.

**III. Distinguish between two kinds of party-spirit.**—1. There is an unrighteous party-spirit, which, as Christians, we are bound to eschew. (1) All party-spirit is by the nature of the case unrighteous which espouses the cause of evil and falsehood: all which is enlisted against the honour of God—against His eternal attributes, truth, justice, holiness—against the gospel or the Church. (2) Party-spirit in a doubtful or even in a good cause is unrighteous when it proceeds from wrong motives, is exhibited in a wrong spirit, or served by wrong means. 2. If it would be most effectual secured by the grace of God against the influence of unchristian party-spirit, it must be by the possession of that party-spirit which is according to righteousness and true holiness. We are born into a world of warfare, and have no choice but to take a part. He that is not with Christ is against Him: he that gathereth not with Him scattereth. Let His name be our war-cry, His Cross inscribed upon our banner. Let His holy ark be erected in our heart, and the Dagon of worldly party-spirit will bow down before it and be broken.—*Prof. B. H. Kennedy.*

*Peter's fall and recovery.*—In the whole history of our Saviour's last sufferings, perhaps there is not a more affecting incident than the denial of Christ by Peter. The natural simplicity with which the story is told, and the striking circumstances with which it abounds, make the deepest impression upon the heart, and raise a tide of the most mixed emotions. 1. The sincere professions of fidelity which Peter made to Jesus, the zeal which he discovered in His defence, and the attachment which he manifested in following Him to the palace of the high priest, are circumstances which present this apostle in an amiable light, and recommend him to our love. 2. The cowardice with which he deserted his Master in the garden when the natural means of defence were taken away, the baseness with which he afterwards denied Him, and the obstinacy with which he persisted in that denial, shew the man in a very different point of view, and fill our minds with the strongest indignation. 3. The conduct of our Saviour in forewarning him of his danger, in restoring him to a sense of his guilt, and in admitting him freely to mercy, gives us the most exalted conceptions of our Saviour's goodness, and fills our souls with just admiration. 4. The speediness of Peter's repentance, the deepness of his contrition, and the tears of sorrow which he sheds melt our souls into compassion, and lead us to forgive this unfortunate man.

**I. The fall of St. Peter.**—1. It affords a melancholy instance of human infirmity. Never did man enjoy greater advantages or make fairer appearances than this disciple. Was it not most natural to think that his faith and zeal, his courage and resolution, would have supported his mind, and carried him through the most fiery trial? But, alas! in the hour of temptation all his principles and resolutions forsook him; this great apostle fell; and in his fall has left an awful lesson to mankind, even to the most eminent Christians, that it is not in man who walketh to direct his steps—that we are not sufficient of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God. 2. Confidence and presumption, even in the most confirmed Christians, are very unpromising signs of steadfastness in religion. This was the rock upon which Peter first split, when he made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. Trust in God is one thing,



and trust in ourselves is another, and there will always be as much difference in the success which attends them as in the powers on which they are founded. If we proceed on a sense of our own weakness, and a reliance on the Divine aid, we shall continue unto the end. But if, like Peter, we set out in our own strength, like him we shall soon be offended, and turn back. 2. Natural courage and precipitate zeal will not supply the place of Christian fortitude, and carry a man through the trials of religion. When St. Peter was surrounded with swords and staves, he was nothing dismayed; his heart and his hand went together in the cause of God. But he who could fight for his Saviour had not fortitude to suffer with him when matters came to extremity. It is vain to promise yourselves a superiority under any temptations, unless you lay the right foundation, by imploring the aid of God's Holy Spirit, whose province only it is to confirm the faithful unto the end. 4. The danger of exposing ourselves to temptations, when we are not called by the providence of God. It was no doubt a concern for his Master which induced Peter to follow Jesus to His trial, and to venture into that dangerous place. But from whatever motive he acted, it could not be matter of duty in the apostle to thrust himself into the company of wretches where his presence could be of no use to his Master, and where his virtue could scarcely come off unhurt. Nay, the prediction of our Blessed Saviour, that He should be denied by Peter that very night, ought to have been sufficient warning to him to have kept at the greatest distance from a place where he was in the most imminent danger of being drawn into that very sin which he had been warned against. 5. How naturally sin hardens the heart, stupefies the conscience, and involves men still deeper in guilt! First, by confidence and presumption, Peter indecently and expressly contradicted his Master, when Jesus foretold the flight of His disciples, and the denial of Him by Peter himself; next, when his Master was about to be apprehended, driven by an intemperate zeal, he was guilty of a most rash and imprudent action in cutting off the ear of the high-priest's servant, which might have caused not only himself but all the rest of the disciples to have been put to death on the spot. Immediately after, when he saw Jesus seized and bound, like the rest of the timid disciples, by an act of cowardice and ingratitude, he forsook his Master and fled. As soon as he had recovered himself, he inconsiderately thrust himself into evil company, in which he was exposed to that very temptation which Christ had warned him against. This was the unhappy occasion of all his subsequent sin and sorrow. Here, disarmed by his fatal security, he was quite unprepared to meet any trial, and of course yielded to the first attack. Scarcely had Peter ended this act of baseness when, going out into the porch, he accidentally heard the cock crow, the very signal of his fall. Might he not now have recollected himself, and gathered resolution to retract his falsehood, and to give an honest testimony to the truth? But, alas! when a man has made one false step, it is not so easy a matter to recover himself. One sin naturally, nay, almost unavoidably, leads to another; one lie frequently requires another to support the falsehood. And in this case the principle of shame, which was before the guardian of innocence, now bars the way to repentance; for men blush to retract the falsehood they have asserted, or to own the baseness they have committed. A second time Peter is charged with being a follower of Jesus; a second time he denies his Master. But he does not even, as before, rest with simple assertions of falsehood. In order to remove every ground of suspicion, he confirms his denial with an oath, calling upon the God of truth to witness his falsehood. To complete the disgrace of this unfortunate man, a third and a more pointed attack is made upon him. Two strong presumptions are adduced against him—that his speech proved him to be a Galilean, and that he had been seen in the garden with Christ. Peter was now tempted to the last degree; and in

order to testify his innocence by resentment of their suspicion, he not only by assertions and oaths, but by dreadful imprecations on himself, abjured his Blessed Lord. He began to curse and to swear, saying, "I know not the man." To aggravate his guilt still more, these denials of Christ were all made in the presence of the other disciples, who had also followed the Master to the palace of the high priest, and who could not be strangers to Peter's falsehood and baseness. Nay, the last and most shameful denial was made in the presence of Christ Himself, who must have been more painfully wounded by this perfidiousness of Peter than by all the indignities and insults of His enemies. Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that Thou visitest him! What is our boasted strength but weakness! And when left to ourselves, how do our firmest principles and our best resolutions melt like snow before the sun!

II. *The recovery of St. Peter.*—1. The necessity of Divine grace, in order to the restoration of fallen saints, as well as to the conversion of habitual sinners. 2. Though good men may accidentally fall, yet, upon a speedy and effectual repentance, they will be restored to the favour of God. 3. Although the restoration of Peter furnishes matter of consolation to good men who have been seduced into a fault, it affords no ground of hope to presumptuous offenders who live in the deliberate practice of sin. If Peter's crime was great in its nature, it was neither premeditated nor of long continuance. It was not so much the act of the man as the effect of sudden and violent temptation which unhinged his mind and threw him into utter confusion. The moment his Saviour gave him the signal he was obedient to the heavenly call. As soon as he recovered the powers of reflexion, he bathed his soul in the tears of repentance, and from that time became the same faithful and affectionate apostle he had been before. But what is all this to deliberate transgressors who make bold with sin and presume upon the mercy of God? 4. Though good men may accidentally fall, they are more easily reclaimed than habitual sinners. Their minds, not being hardened by sin, are awakened by the gentlest calls of the Spirit; and the sense of virtue revives upon the first motions and suggestions of conscience. 5. The sins of the best men, into which they fall accidentally, are expiated with the strongest sense of sorrow and affliction. When men are truly concerned, they do not consider what they are to get by their tears, or what profit their sorrow will yield. The soul must vent its grief; and godly sorrow is as truly the natural expression of inward pain as worldly sorrow is, however much they differ in their causes and effects. When therefore we find ourselves truly affected with a sense of our sins, and in earnest lament our ingratitude and disobedience to God, we have the best indication that the spirit of religion is still alive within us, and that we are not given up to a reprobate mind.—*A. Donnan.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 54. "*Afar off.*"—This is a most unwelcome revelation of the apostle. We see him separated from the Saviour. He is following, but not so closely as to indicate his association with Jesus. The adherent is being lost in the apostate. The disciple is being degraded to the level of a deserter. Love is being chilled to lethargy. The ice of the coward is freezing the soul of the

Rock-man. Every appeal to love and to fidelity which was made in silence by the utter desolation of the Christ, every incentive to steadfastness which arose from the memory of his ardent and unreserved pledges, and from the transcendent importance of consistency, was consigned to oblivion. His leaden feet moved slowly towards the palace of the high priest.—*Dean Lefroy.*

Vers. 57, 58. *False witness through misapplication of words.*—The words laid to His charge might have been, and probably were, literally such as He had used. But the falseness of the evidence lay in the misapplication of them. Jesus had spoken of the temple of His body; the witnesses gave in the evidence as if He meant the Jewish Temple of stone. Hence it was no doubt that their evidence could not be made to agree, because each false witness would probably enough add something more which might go to prove the criminal meaning of those words—that they were so spoken, namely, as to apply to the holy building at Jerusalem. Even so we Christians—and it is a serious and fearful consideration—may be quoting the words of Divine truth, the very language of our Lord, and yet be guilty of false evidence. When, like the Jewish witnesses, we first frame a position, and then seek for texts of Scripture to support it, and apply these only in reference to the view predetermined on, are we not doing even the same?—*S. Hinds.*

Ver. 60. *The patience of Christ.*—Jesus astonishes and confounds His judge by His silence and patience. But there is a very great difference betwixt confounding and converting. It is no small humiliation and mortification to see ourselves deserted by those who are most obliged to defend us. How much greater is it then to see them at the head of our enemies! This is what Jesus Christ teaches us to bear without bitterness, animosity, or the least desire of revenge.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 62. *Christ's testimony to Himself.*—Why did the Lord, when thus adjured, break His silence? Some have thought it was out of respect to the office of the high priest, as the representative of God and the spiritual ruler of the people; and if we can separate the office from the character of him who held it, no more fitting opportunity could have presented itself.

For here was the head of the nation, considered as a theocracy, demanding of One whose credentials shewed that He came direct from God who He was. This was the first time that Jesus was face to face with the chief minister of His Father's religion. It ought not to have been so. His claims ought long ago to have been investigated, as to whether He really fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah. But long ere this they had prejudged His case, and condemned Him. And now they sought not for the truth, but for that which might enable them to carry out their evil will against Him. He might, consequently, I think, if He had only looked to the motive of Caiaphas in putting such a question, have declined to answer. But the crisis had come. He must assert who He was, though He knew it would lead to His crucifixion.—*M. F. Sadler.*

Vers. 63, 64. *The culpability of the Sanhedrin.*—Some have been troubled with the thought that the judges of Jesus were conscientious. Was it not their duty, when any one came forward with Messianic pretensions, to judge whether or not his claim was just? And did they not honestly believe that Jesus was not what He professed to be? No doubt they did honestly believe so. We must ascend to a much earlier period to be able to judge their conduct accurately. It was when the claims of Jesus were first submitted to them that they went astray. He, being such as He was, could only have been welcomed and appreciated by expectant, receptive, holy minds. They were anything but that. They were totally incapable of understanding Him, and saw no beauty that they should desire Him. As He often told them Himself, being such as they were, they could not believe. The fault lay not so much in what they did as in what they were. Being in the wrong path, they went forward to the end. It may be said that they walked according to their light; but the light that was in them was darkness.—*J. Stalker, D.D.*



Ver. 65. *Christ dishonoured and suffering in His senses.*—The image of the invisible God refuses not, for our sakes, to be dishonoured by the most unworthy treatment. All His senses suffer. 1. His sight, by their covering His face. 2. His hearing, by their blasphemies. 3. His smelling, by the nastiness of their spittle. 4. His feeling, by their buffeting Him, and the blows given by these servants. 5. His taste, by the blood which proceeded from these blows, etc. This is a dreadful motive of humiliation for the sinner, who seeks only to gratify his senses; and it is more so for the proud and revengeful person, who cannot bear the least injury, and is a mere idolater of his false honour.—*P. Quesnel.*

Vers. 66, 67. *Peter discovered.*—The place which the apostle occupied illustrates the reign of Providence in and over what we regard as trifles. He sat in such a position that either the glow of the fire or its light shone full upon his features. How often have we known of every arrangement being made to perfect some plan or scheme or purpose with the most studied care and the most anxious regard to design and to completeness, and yet all is undone by some simple trifle being omitted or disregarded as of no consequence whatever, and as being most unlikely to affect the issue the success of which commanded such attention, thought, and care! So here the golden glow of the fire or the flicker of the lightsome flame fell precisely upon the face of the one man in that group upon whom it was of the gravest consequence that it should not fall! And with his face thus illuminated and his very feature revealed, his affectation of indifference appeared to the maid to be the meanest dissimulation.—*Dean Lefroy.*

Vers. 68-72. *Constant falls.*—At times perhaps, after reading the life of some holy man, we have ventured to think of stricter devotion and a closer walk with God; and then some

ordinary temptation, some common fault, has brought us down from our dreams and shewn us what worms we are. We have gone forth in the morning relying on our steadfastness, and we have come home humbled and ashamed. We have felt sure that nothing could move us, and the merest opportunity was enough. We have risen perhaps from sinning, and abhorred ourselves, and been filled with disgust at our foolishness, and we have returned and sinned again. We have prayed against temptation, and we have run into it. At every Communion we vow ourselves Christ's servants; at every Communion we have to repent of broken vows. We have knelt down and wept, and next week we have had to weep again. Our infirmity is miserable. We fall and fall again.—*C. F. Secretan.*

*The temptation to deny Christ before men.*—This is a common temptation. It is the first and earliest temptation of the young stepping out into the world. It is a boy's temptation, when he first finds himself under a strange roof, and has to kneel down at night beneath the eye of a strange companion, and he feels uneasy, and half inclined to forego his accustomed prayers. It is the young man's temptation, when he takes his place among his fellows, and too often finds himself, like Peter, surrounded by the enemies of his Lord—when he sees Jesus insulted, the holy name blasphemed, saintliness a byword, and the faith of his affection treated with mockery and contempt—when inquiring eyes are bent upon him to know how it is he does not echo their irreligious mirth. "Thou also art one of them. Thy speech betrayeth thee." Then comes the trial of his constancy; then is it shewn what root he has in himself; then the eye of Jesus rests upon His young disciple, and good spirits watch what answer he will make to his blasphemers; then is the grace of God waiting too to help his infirmity, and enable that young Christian soldier to stand his ground with manfulness, and quietly but de-

cisively declare himself for God and His truth against sin. "Yes, I am one of Jesus' followers. I freely confess it. I care not who knows my mind. I believe in Christ. I make it my study to serve Him. I do scruple at an oath. I find no pleasure in the language of uncleanness. I am not used to talk so. I do not like such ways. I think them wrong. I hope I shall always think so." And if you hardly find strength to speak out so boldly, and your heart fails you in your hour of trial, just when you should stand firm; if you feel inclined rather to laugh off the imputation of singularity, to disown the character of a disciple, and talk and jest with the rest,—oh! remember, "if we deny Christ, He will also deny us."—*Ibid.*

Ver. 71. *Peter cursing and swearing.*—This was no doubt the resurrection of an old fisherman's habit, long since dead and buried. Peter was just the man likely to be a profane swearer in his youth—the headlong man of temper, who likes to say a thing with as much emphasis and exaggeration as possible. Old habits of sin are hard to kill. Till his dying day the man who has been a drunkard or a fornicator, a liar or a swearer, will have to keep watch and ward over the graveyard in which he has buried the past. 2. Yet there was a kind of method in the madness of Peter's profanity. When he wanted to prove that he was none of Christ's, he could not do better than take to cursing. It is one of the strongest testimonies to Jesus still that even those who do not believe in Him expect cleanness of speech and conduct from His followers, and are astonished if those who bear His name do things which when done by others are matters of course.—*J. Stalker, D.D.*

Ver. 72. *Thought leading to penitence.*—**I. Peter alone.**—Solitude is a test. It often shews the bent of a man's mind. It is a critical time, and may issue in good or for evil. Satan watches for such occasions to war against the soul.

**II. Peter thinking.**—There is much thinking that is mere dissipation. Peter's thought was earnest and practical. Such is necessary. Without it there can be no real life, progress, and achievement.

**III. Peter thinking about his sin.**—Such a subject is repulsive and painful. Sin in the abstract is so much more the sins of men, and especially of friends and kindred; but most of all our own sin. And yet thinking of our sins is right and necessary. We shall have to do it sooner or later; and it is infinitely better to do it in time than when too late.

**IV. Peter thinking of his sin with penitential sorrow.**—"He wept." Tears not always true. There may be repentance without tears, and tears without repentance. But Peter was utterly sincere. His tears were the real expression of the grief and shame that wrung his heart. Shall we love what Peter so hated? Shall we indulge in ourselves what Peter found so bitter in its fruits?

**V. Peter thinking of his sin with hope in Christ.**—He "called to mind the word," etc. But he would not stop here. Other words would be recalled, and especially that gracious word of promise and of hope (Luke xxii. 32). Besides, he could not but be conscious that the look of his Master indicated mercy more than judgment. That look pierced him through and through. It manifested not only knowledge and reproof and grief, but also love.—*William Forsyth.*

*Peter's case no exceptional one.*—Cannot you remember in your own life brave resolutions and miserable fulfillments—promises which seemed easy to make, but which turned out so hard to keep? Cannot you remember what a picture you have sometimes drawn in your own mind of your intended resistance to temptation—how nobly and faithfully you imagined yourself, in your thoughts beforehand, sorely tried and proudly triumphing over the temptation? And cannot you remember, too, after the storm of temptation had

passed over you, what a miserable shew you had actually made, how lightly you had been overcome, with what wretched weakness and stupidity and folly you had been provoked or terrified or enticed from your strong purposes of good? In the apostles we but see the reflexion of our own doings towards our Master.—*Dean Church.*

*Recollection more needed than information.*—Peter's recollection of what he had formerly heard was the occasion of his repentance. We do not sufficiently consider how much more we need recollection than information. We know a thousand things, but it is necessary that they should be kept alive in our hearts by a constant and vivid recollection. It is therefore extremely absurd and childish for people to say, "You tell me nothing but what I know." I answer, "You forget many things, and therefore it is necessary that line should be upon line and precept upon precept." Peter himself afterwards said in his epistles, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them." We are prone to forget what we do know; whereas we should consider that whatever good thing we know is only so far good to us as it is remembered to purpose.—*Richard Cecil.*

*Tears of contrition.*—Who need be ashamed of tears wrung from him on his knees? Let sinners take shame rather for having no tears to flow, for repentance so moderate, for devotion so poor and low, for feelings so blunted by the habitude of sin, and hearts so dry

and dead that they never want to relieve themselves by tears. We feel a little sorry, and think and look serious, and resolve to mend. We are not moved to weep. And yet a touching narrative will bring water into our eyes; our interest in a mere fictitious character will often moisten them. Shall our emotions of religion be so faint and feeble, our sense of sin so dull, as never to draw forth one tear? I am not for any affectation of religious feeling. I would make every allowance for a difference of temperament; but those of us, at least, who have wept for sorrow, how is it, I would ask, that we have never wept for sin?—*C. F. Secretan.*

*Peter's lifelong repentance.*—Some say that, after his sad fall, he was ever and anon weeping, and that his face was even furrowed with continual tears. He had no sooner taken this poison but he vomited it up again, ere it got to the vitals; he had no sooner handled this serpent but he turned it into a rod, to scourge his soul with remorse for sinning against such clear light and strong love and sweet discoveries of the heart of Christ to him. Clement notes that Peter so repented that, all his life after, every night when he heard the cock crow, he would fall upon his knees, and, weeping bitterly, would beg pardon for his sins? Ah! souls, you can easily sin as the saints; but can you repent with the saints? Many can sin with David and Peter who cannot repent with David and Peter, and so must perish for ever.—*T. Brooks.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XIV.

Vers. 3-9. *Common things idealised.*—Suppose that a cultured foreigner should walk over the ruins and examine the sculpture and paintings of a European city. Near the close of the day his soul is filled with a strange, undefinable joy. He has a feeling of awe mixed with gratitude to the God of such beauty and grandeur. It is a feeling to which he cannot give a name, and which he cannot shake off. Oppressed by it, he enters one of the ancient churches. At that moment the

organ awakes in the gallery, and fills the twilight with its music. Now it sinks into the faintest whisper or rises into a tempest of melody, and he is entranced. The organ, to him, is not made of wood or metal, nor is its music simply the escaping of the air. It is the voice in which his strange and oppressive joy finds expression. It lifts into distinctness and invests with meaning the emotions which burdened his soul. And these emotions go out in its music as a well-



defined and precious sacrifice to the God of the beautiful and the grand. Now as the organ became the voice through which the artist's undefined joy became definite and went out in service to God, so Christ endowed the offering of Mary with voice and beauty and most heroic purpose, and then accepted it.—*N. R. Hamer.*

*Show love to the living.*—Truly as well as beautifully has one said: "Do not keep all the alabaster boxes of your love and tenderness sealed up until your friends are dead. I would rather have a bare coffin without a flower and a funeral without an eulogy than a life without the sweetness of love and sympathy. Let us anoint our friends before—and for their burial. Post-mortem kindness does not cheer the burdened spirit. Flowers on the coffin cast no fragrance backward over the weary days."

*Self-sacrifice fruitful.*—A Scotch woman, who had been in the habit of giving a penny a day for the missions, was given by a visitor 2 sixpence to buy some meat—a luxury which she had not lately enjoyed. But she thought to herself, "I have long done very well on porridge, so I will give the sixpence also to God." This fact came to the knowledge of a missionary secretary, who narrated it at a missionary breakfast. The host and his guests were profoundly impressed by it, the host himself saying that he had never denied himself a chop for the cause of God. He thereupon subscribed £500 additional, and others of the party followed his example, till a large sum had been raised. It is probable that this poor woman's sixpence was larger in God's sight than the thousands contributed by these rich people, for she gave of her poverty, and they out of their abundance. There is nothing so fruitful as self-sacrifice.

*Ver. 4. False estimates of waste.*—A Christian gentleman, when blamed by his partner for doing so much for the cause of God, replied, "Your foxhounds cost more in one year than my religion ever cost in two." People sometimes complain of what they call "waste of life" in establishing Christian missions among savage people or unhealthy climates, *e.g.* in establishing or maintaining the Nyanza Mission the lives of Bishops Hannington and Parker, of O'Neill, Shergold Smith, Mackay, and several others have been sacrificed. But were those lives "wasted"? There, as elsewhere, it has proved that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

*Ver. 6. Approval of Christ.*—When Antimachus, an Ionian poet and musician, repeated one of his compositions before a large audience, his language was so obscure that all his hearers retired with the exception of Plato. Seeing this, he remarked,

"I shall read none the less, for Plato is to me one instead of all." How much more should the disciple of Christ be content with His approval!

*Ver. 7. Christian care for the poor.*—When the deacon St. Lawrence was asked, in the Decian persecution, to shew the prefect the most precious treasures of the Church at Rome, he shewed him the sick, the lame, the blind. "It is incredible," said Lucian, the pagan jeerer and sceptic, "to see the ardour with which those Christians help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are all brothers." "These Galileans," said Julian the apostate, "nourish not only their own poor, but ours as well." In the year 252 a plague raged in Carthage. The heathen threw out their dead and sick upon the streets, and ran away from them for fear of contagion, and cursed the Christians. St. Cyprian, on the contrary, assembled his congregation, told them to love those who cursed them; and the rich working with their money, the poor with their hands, never rested till the dead were buried, the sick cared for, and the city saved from destruction.

*Ver. 8. Much result from small beginnings.*—There was once a child in an English parsonage who shyly gave a sixpence of his very own to "the missionary deputation" as he sat at breakfast. The missionary spent the sixpence on a Prayer Book and took it out to Australia. One Sunday as he was waiting in his church, he saw a young girl peep into the building. He welcomed her with kind words, and finding she was a workhouse girl, sent out from England, who had got a situation at a farm twenty miles inland, he gave her the Prayer Book. Several weeks passed away, and one day a rough-looking man asked to speak to him. "Ain't you the parson that gave our servant girl a Prayer Book?" His wife, it appeared, was very ill, and interested at hearing from the emigrant girl about the gift of the Prayer Book, sent to beg from the clergyman a pastoral visit. With some difficulty he managed this. The sick woman was comforted, and departed in the faith of Christ. The husband's mind was impressed. He started up his neighbours to build a church at that outlying spot, in which to this day services and sacraments are celebrated. How much can be done even by a little effort!

*"She hath done what she could."*—Not long ago, in an American city, there lived a woman who had once been proficient in her trade of dress and cloak-making, but a severe illness shattered her mind and quite unfitted her for pursuing it again. She could not endure to be idle and useless, and so would

go about from house to house among the poor, to cut and fit their simple garments, always refusing to take any pay for her labours. "It is a great pleasure to me to do it," she would say in her childlike way. "God has taken away a great deal of my health and a portion of my mind; I can't go about among grand folks as I used to; I should get all confused with their rich trimmings, and make mistakes with their new patterns. I can't be trusted with so much responsibility—it bewilders me. But I love to go from family to family among the poor, especially God's poor. When I see the mothers worn out with overwork, I like to step in and say, 'I've come in to sew for you a few days.' When I know they stop going to church because their old Sunday gown isn't fit to be seen, I like just to take it, and sponge it, and turn it, and set them going again. When I see the children staying away from Sunday school because the weather has got so cold, and their shawls are thin or their cloaks worn out, it makes me happy to ward up the old cloak again, and to do up warm jackets to wear under the thin shawls. It's true," she would add, "God doesn't expect much of me, because He knows that my health is weakly and my mind unsettled, but when the end comes I would like to have Him say, 'She hath done what she could.'"

Vers. 11. *A picture of Judas.*—There is a picture in one of the Brussels galleries which possesses awful eloquence. The scene is laid near the Holy City. Night has flung its mantle over home and field and Temple. Three Jewish artisans are resting after toil beside the embers, glowing and lightsome, of a fire. In the foreground their work lies wellnigh done. That work is a cross. A man in full stature fills the scene. His face is pallid, though strong. His lips seem as though sealed for ever. His eyes, dark and furtive, seem wild. His stride is long, his step firm. In his right hand he grasps a bag of money. As he makes his way to the Temple to fling the fiery pieces upon the pavement, he stumbles upon the workmen who are making that cross which is to be occupied by his innocent Master, and the knowledge of which is degradation and death to Judas.—*Dean Lefroy.*

Vers. 18, 19. *Betraying Christ.*—Upon the mouldering walls of the refectory at Santa Maria delle Grazie, in Milan, are the faded outlines of the most famous fresco in the world. It is the Last Supper of Leonardo da Vinci. The artist has taken the moment when the Master has said to His disciples that one of them would betray Him, and the disciples have started up and fallen into excited group, and they are depicted in every variety of surprise and consternation,

sorrow and self-searching. Is the artist right in so representing it? There was only one traitor amongst them, surely! Judas knew he meant to betray the Master; but the others were loyal men—nothing farther from their thoughts than handing over the beloved Lord to His persecutors and judges. I think, if you will reflect, you will see that the artist is right, for this reason—these men realised the possibilities which lay in their nature. They did not mean to betray, and yet they might be on the moment of betrayal. And all of us have understood how a sudden question applied to us, a sudden charge made against us, however unjustly, or a charge made against another justly, will sometimes reveal ourselves, as it were, and shew what we little suspected, that we were capable of enormities which, in our better moments, we condemned, and that we were even at that moment standing upon the very brink of a precipice, which is revealed to us by a lightning-flash. The artist, then, was probably right in shewing all the disciples equally anxious, though only one was conscious of treachery.

"*Is it I?*"—A preacher in a certain village church once gave an easy lesson in Christian ethics from the letters of the alphabet. It was to this effect: "You say, A lies, B steals, C swears, D drinks, F brags, G goes into a passion, H gets into debt. The letter I is the only one of which you have nothing to say."

Vers. 22-25. *The Holy Communion.*—All our churches contain the apparatus for a certain sacred ceremony. And this is no novel introduction; for when we examine the most ancient sanctuaries, or excavate the ruins of the oldest structures, we find this arrangement existing—nay, even when we descend into the catacombs of Rome, where, underground, the infant Church of Jesus worshipped in the days of persecution, we find due provision made for celebrating the Holy Communion. Up then almost to the very era of the Saviour's mission do we trace this ancient institution, and every time we behold the Lord's table standing in its appointed place we see an evidence of the truth of Christianity; for there is no way of accounting for its existence, or for the appearance of a new rite amongst the religious ceremonies of mankind, at a particular period, except by assenting to the truth of the gospel narrative that, on a certain eventful night, Jesus of Nazareth established the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood, and commanded it to be observed for an everlasting memorial.—*Dr. Hardman.*

*Spiritual nourishment.*—When General Grant took the Federal army at Chattanooga, it was feeble and dispirited because it was almost destitute. The food of the army was hauled with difficulty over moun-

tain roads and the supply was totally insufficient. His first movement, on assuming command—and it was that which eventually led to victory—was to repair the railroads and open up communication, so that the army soon had everything it needed. There is a like necessity in the spiritual life of Christ's army. We are worth very little in the service of Christ except as we are spiritually nourished. The soul is easily starved by lack of appropriate food. And our spiritual nourishment must come from Christ.

*Sacramental grace.*—Were a king to offer grants of land to any who would serve in a war for the defence of the country, it would be a foolish question, "Can we not obtain a grant without serving in the war?" The king might give a grant to some who served him in a different way, but in ordinary cases he would not. God may save a man without the sacraments; but those who reject the sacraments are, to say the least, in great peril. There was a labouring man some time since in one of our northern towns who, owing to some mistake, had been misinformed as to the hour of service. He came when the celebration of the Holy Communion was just over, and when they came out of church they found him waiting sadly outside. The clergyman explained how the mistake had arisen, and expressed his sorrow for it. "Never mind, master," said the man; but the poor fellow could not help adding, "only I did so build upon it." He knew his own weakness, and his need of Divine grace and supernatural assistance; and so he was coming, not as if there was any virtue in the bare act of coming, not as if the Sacrament itself could save him, but because he had grasped the great truth that it is through the Sacrament that God imparts grace and strength and life to us His children, unworthy as we are of the least of His benefits.

*The Eucharist a feast of consecration.*—Here we renounce the idols of the world and put on more and more devotion to our God. Not long ago a foreign potentate was received with much pomp and circumstance by the Lord Mayor of London. He came along the Strand with courtiers and attendants to Temple Bar, at the borders of the old city, where the Lord Mayor met him and delivered to him the keys of London, so signifying that he was welcome not merely to the freedom of the city, but also to the custody of it. As we at this sacramental gateway of promise pass out into the larger and better life, let us turn over the keys to our Prince. Come in, Thou Blessed One! Come in and possess Thine own.

*The Eucharist prized.*—In times of persecution men would risk their lives to get their Communion. A hundred years ago, during the French Revolution, when religion was abolished by the French Parliament, when Sunday was done away with, the

clergy were hunted into the thickets like beasts of prey, and none might conduct or attend a service on pain of death, did people go without this means of grace? No! From time to time a messenger hurried with a mysterious watchword from house to house. "The black swamp," he would mutter, and pass on without greeting or farewell. But the persons addressed understood him. Shortly after midnight, men and women, dressed in dark clothes, would meet silently by the black swamp below the village, and there, by the light of a carefully guarded lantern, one of the homeless priests would give the Body and Blood of the Lord to the faithful of the neighbourhood. They all knew that at any moment, before the alarm could be given, the soldiers might be upon them, and a volley of grape-shot might stretch them bleeding and dying on the ground. What matter? Man might kill their body, but Jesus had said that He would raise them up at the last day.

*Benefit of the Sacrament.*—A poor woman was once asked by a neighbour what good she got by receiving the Blessed Sacrament. "Can you understand it?" asked her neighbour. "No," said the woman, "I cannot understand it, I cannot explain it; but this I know, that I go to the altar empty and I come down full."

*The Holy Grail.*—Such was the name given long ago to the actual cup out of which our Saviour dispensed the first Lord's Supper. This cup, it was believed, had been taken up to heaven, but was revealed miraculously to every one whose heart was pure. And it was thought that the sight of this cup imparted pardon and peace to all who were favoured with a vision of it. This was the tradition believed by our forefathers, and there is a beautiful truth in it which all who consider may understand. For beneath the outward symbols of the Holy Eucharist there is a Divine reality which is seen only by those whose hearts have been purified. Everybody sees the bread and wine, but few see the Divine Flesh and Blood behind them that purchased salvation for us on the bitter cross. Long ago people used to set out on painful pilgrimages in the hope of seeing the Holy Grail. They prayed, they fasted, they wrought good works, they longed for a sight of the wonderful vessel that would give them blessing and joy. But these painful pilgrimages were needless. The Holy Grail was nearer than they thought. For the wonderful vision is to be seen at every Communion, and all we need to see it is a pure heart.

Ver. 24. *Bloodshedding as an expression of love.*—A certain Asiatic queen, departing this life, left behind her three accomplished sons, all arrived to years of maturity. The young princes were at strife as to who



should pay the highest respect to their royal mother's memory. To give scope for their generous contentions they agreed to meet at the place of interment, and there present the most honourable gift they knew how to devise or were able to procure. The eldest came, and exhibited a sumptuous monument, consisting of the richest materials, and ornamented with the most exquisite workmanship. The second ransacked all the beauties of the blooming creation, and offered a garland of such admirable colours and delightful odours as had never been seen before. The youngest appeared without any pompous preparations, having only a crystal basin in one hand and a silver bodkin in the other. As soon as he approached he threw open his breast, pierced a vein which lay opposite to his heart, received the blood in the transparent vase, and, with an air of affectionate reverence, placed it on the tomb. The spectators, struck with the sight, gave a shout of general applause, and immediately gave preference to this oblation. If it was reckoned such a singular expression of love to expend a few of those precious drops for the honour of a parent, oh, how matchless, how ineffable, was the love of Jesus in pouring out all His vital blood for the salvation of His enemies!

Ver. 26. *Affliction producing song.*—In his *Hunting for the Nightingale in England*, John Burroughs tells of listening one black night to the song of the sedge-warbler in the hedge. It was a singular medley of notes, hurried chirps, trills, calls, warbles. When it stopped singing, a stone flung into the bush set it going again, its song now being so persistently animated as to fill the gloom and darkness with joy. Samuel Rutherford's most gladsome letters are those from his prison. The saints have sung their sweetest when the thorn has pierced their heart.

*The power of a hymn.*—A little boy came to one of our city missionaries, and holding out a dirty and well-worn bit of printed paper, said, "Please, sir, father sent me to get a clean paper like this." Taking it from his hand, the missionary unfolded it, and found it was a paper containing the beautiful hymn beginning, "Just as I am." The missionary looked down with interest into the face earnestly upturned to him, and asked the little boy where he got it, and why he wanted a clean one. "We found it, sir," said he, "in sister's pocket after she died; she used to sing it all the time when she was sick, and loved it so much that father wanted to get a clean one to put in a frame to hang it up. Won't you give us a clean one, sir?"

Vers. 29-31. *Mistaken self-complacency.*—

It was well said once by a remarkable man, and the words are worth remembering, "Bear in mind that you are just then beginning to go wrong when you are a little pleased with yourself because you are going right." Let us watch against this as a snare of Satan, and endeavour ever to maintain the apostolic attitude: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself." And let me caution you not to make the mistake of supposing that this self-complacency can be effectually guarded against by a mere use of the recognised theological expressions duly ascribing all the merit and all the praise to God. These are too often merely the garments of spiritual pride, and by no means must they be mistaken for true humility.

*Presumption.*—Henry Winstanley, who built the first Eddystone Lighthouse in 1696, had such confidence in the structure that he expressed a wish that he might be in the lighthouse during the fiercest possible hurricane. In November 1703 he had his wish gratified; and the morning after the tempest not a vestige of the lighthouse remained.

*Danger of presumption.*—A scientific gentleman, deputed by the Government, was, not many years ago, examining the scene of a fatal explosion. He was accompanied by the underviewer of the colliery, and as they were inspecting the edges of a goaf (a region of foul air), it was observed that the "Davy" lamps which they carried were afire. "I suppose," said the inspector, "that there is a good deal of fire-damp hereabouts." "Thousands and thousands of cubic feet all through the goaf," coolly replied his companion. "Why," exclaimed the official, "do you mean to say that there is nothing but that shred of wire-gauze between us and eternity?" "Nothing at all," replied the underviewer, very composedly. "There's nothing here where we stand but that gauze wire to keep the whole mine from being blown into the air." The precipitate retreat of the Government official was instantaneous. And thus it should be with the sinner; his retreat from the ways of sin—those "goafs" of poisonous air—should be instantaneous. Sir Humphry Davy's lamp was never designed as a substitute for caution if accidentally or unknowingly carried into foul air, whereas many do so knowingly and habitually.

Ver. 32. *The Garden of Gethsemane.*—There is a garden in the Alps surrounded by dizzy peaks, mighty glaciers, yawning crevasses. There one hears the gurgling waters far beneath one's feet, like the moan of imprisoned spirits. The approach to that lonely island in a frozen sea is through a broken way of ice and snow and frost. The route lies in uncertainty and even peril. No leaf, flower, or shrub appears along the

icy sea. But when the garden is reached, the gentian and the forget-me-not, the saxifrage and the rose, are found decking the solitude with beauty and the scene with life. So here this Gethsemane garden has its environment of height and depth—of shadow, dark, dreary, and deathlike—of light, faint and full; but as we, by faith and in love, approach reverently near to Him who gives it all its meaning, we gather those fruits and flowers which ripen best in an atmosphere which was sanctified by the presence of the Man of Sorrows, and which for that reason are likely to be refreshing to those who, living His life, breathe His Spirit.—*Dean Lefroy.*

*In communion with God.*—There was each morning, during General Gordon's first sojourn in the Soudan, one half-hour during which there lay outside his tent a handkerchief, and the whole camp knew the full significance of that small token, and most religiously was it respected by all there, whatever was their colour, creed, or business. No foot dared to enter the tent so guarded. No message, however pressing, was carried in. Whatever it was, of life or death, it had to wait until the guardian signal was removed. Every one knew that Gordon, in there alone, was in communion with God.

Ver. 33. *Mutual sympathy.*—Christ asked His disciples to watch with Him in Gethsemane. Tender touch of nature to make Him with the whole world kin. Two infants will walk hand in hand "in the dark" where neither would go alone. Invalids, who have counted the strokes of midnight wakeful hours, conjured by the wall-flashes and flickers of dim lamps, and need no other service, cry out, "Father! Mother! Some one!" We sit by them, long and patiently, perhaps dozing disciple-like as we hold their hands, saying and doing nothing, but *being* near them. Through the streets of Paris, between prison and block, the most desperate were often observed sitting upon the cart's edge hand in hand. Triumph wants friends also. Jesus wants our sympathy still in His warfare with sin on the earth. He who so wanted the society of men will have His own with Him where He is, at last and for ever.—*Haynes.*

Ver. 36. *Resignation to the Divine will.*—Epictetus, a heathen philosopher, thus prayed, "Great God, use me henceforward according to Thy pleasure. I am altogether of Thy mind. It is indifferent to me how Thou dealest with me; I refuse nothing if Thou seest it good for me; lead me where Thou thinkest it convenient; clothe me in what garment Thou pleassest, whether it be whole or torn, either shall be welcome; whether Thou wilt have me to bear the office of magistrate, or lead a private life;

whether Thou wilt have me to stay in my own country, or let me be driven into exile; whether Thou wilt have me rich or poor; in all this, by my equanimity, I will justify Thee before men." This from the lips of a heathen is wonderful, and the more so because real Christians seldom reach such an elevation of soul. The King of Arragon (Alfonso) was once asked whom he considered the most perfect man; and he replied, "Him who receives all things, whether sad or pleasant, as coming from a kind and wise Father's hand, with an even mind." And so it is now; he is the most perfect Christian who is not lifted up by prosperity, nor cast down by adversity; who, whatever happens to him, still looks beyond second causes to God, the great first cause of all; who makes it his daily business to desire nothing but that which God appoints; and whose constant prayer is, that God's will may be fully carried out, and accomplished in him, and in all his concerns. Edward Payson, who was a great sufferer, being asked if he saw any particular reason for a dispensation, replied: "No, but I am as well satisfied as if I could see ten thousand. God's will is the very perfection of all reason." Mr. Simeon, on his death-bed, telling an inquiring friend of his dependence upon God, said: "He cannot do anything against my will."

"*Thy will be done.*"—It is related that when St. Gertrude used to say the Lord's Prayer she would repeat the words "Thy will be done" several times over. One day, when she was praying in this manner, the Saviour appeared to her holding health in His right hand and sickness in His left. "Choose, My daughter, which you please," said the Lord; to which she replied, "Thy will be done, not mine, O Lord." Many an impressive homily on acquiescence to the Divine will has been written by sufferers. Richard Baxter was throughout life familiarised, as few are, with hours of sickness and prostration. Perhaps it was this habitual discipline of pain, causing him for long years to hover on the very border-land of death, which imparted so much pathos and fervency to his *Saint's Rest*, and its realistic vision of "the better country." Quaint and beautiful is his prayer—a formula of devout submission—to Him whose loving hand and wisdom he recognised in it all. "*What Thou wilt; where Thou wilt; when Thou wilt!*"

Ver. 38. "*Watch and pray.*"—There is a custom among the Breton sailors, when launching their boats, to offer this prayer, "Keep me, my God; my boat is so small, and Thy ocean is so wide." The life of a Christian may be likened unto a frail bark cast upon the mighty ocean, which unless rightly steered may run into some contrary current that will toss it about and turn its course. In this

great ocean of ungodliness it is necessary to pray that the current of sin may not turn us from our course. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation"; and if ye do, "call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver Thee," saith the Lord. Prayer is not enough. Like the Scots when they conquered the English at Bannockburn, or the English when they conquered the French at Crecy, we are to rise from our knees; to stand up and fight; to quit us like men; "having done all," to stand. We are to put on the whole armour of God; and since we know neither when nor where the adversary may assault us, we are never to put it off. Live and die in harness,—using such precautions as some say Cromwell did against the assassin's dagger—his dress concealed a shirt of mail. In the council-chamber, at the banquet, in court as in camp, he wore it always. Let the good man go to his workshop, counting-room, market, the place of business, and scenes of enjoyment, as the peasant of the East to his plough, where fiery Redouins scour the land, and bullets whistling from the bush may suddenly call him to drop the ox-goad and fly to arms. The sun glances on other iron than the plough-share, a sword hangs at his thigh, and a gun is slung at his back.—*T. Guthrie, D.D.*

Ver. 39. "*Spake the same words.*"—The late Rev. W. H. Krause, of Dublin, was visiting a lady in a depressed state—"weak, oh, so weak!" She told him that she had been very much troubled in mind that day, because in meditation and prayer she had found it impossible to govern her thoughts, and kept merely going over the same things again and again. "Well, my dear friend," was his prompt reply, "there is provision in the gospel for that too. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, three times prayed, and spake the same words." This seasonable application of Scripture was a source of great comfort to her.

Ver. 40. *The power of sleep.*—The most violent passion and excitement cannot keep even powerful minds from sleep; Alexander the Great slept on the field of Arbela, and Napoleon upon that of Austerlitz. Even stripes and torture cannot keep off sleep, as criminals have been known to give way to it on the rack. Noises which at first serve to drive it away soon become indispensable to its existence; thus, while a stage-coach, stopping to change horses, wakens all the passengers, the proprietor of an iron forge, who slept close to the din of hammers, forges, and blast furnaces, would wake up if there was any interruption to them during the night; and a sick miller who had his mill stopped on that account passed sleepless nights until the mill resumed its usual noise.

Homer, in his *Iliad*, elegantly represents sleep as overcoming all men, and even the gods, except Jupiter alone.

Ver. 41. *The hour of crisis.*—Often has the fate of kingdoms and empires been left to the decision of an hour, and that hour of inconceivable importance to millions. Often have the rights and the liberties, the freedom or the slavery, of a nation depended upon the result of a contest where valour and patriotism and magnanimity struggled hard amidst the clash of arms and the din of war; and their bosoms have beat with trembling anxiety, as from lip to lip the important announcement passed, "The hour is come." But although we could put together all the interesting anticipations, all the distressing and conflicting hopes and fears, all the important deeds and destinies that were ever suspended upon any hour in the world's history, they would instantly sink into insignificance compared with the vast and eternal interests of innumerable myriads which were suspended upon the results of that hour which our Saviour declares in the text to be at hand. The fate of kingdoms and empires is nothing compared with the fate of the universe, upon whose destiny it was to bear its decision for eternity.

Ver. 47. *Mistaken zeal.*—The Saviour's method is to conquer force by submission, violence by meekness, sin by the Cross. Yet many make this mistake, and defend a spiritual cause by carnal weapons. On a large scale the Crusades were an example of a continent ready to fight the devil in others with swords, without being ready to fight the devil in themselves with self-denial. All violence used in religion by inquisitors or by men impatient to enthrone the right is an example of Peter's mistake. All hatred of those doing wrong, all vituperation of them, is a Peter's sword. What Christ wants is some that can bear a cross with Him, not such as will draw a sword for Him.—*R. Glover.*

Ver. 61. *Silence often more effective than speech.*—"I have often repented having spoken, but I never have been sorry for having kept silent." So said a friend in our hearing, and his words often are recalled to mind. There are occasions when duty bids a man speak, if he be a true man, a Christian man—when, unless he fling all fear of consequences to the winds, and utter words in behalf of truth, he will shew himself a coward. There are times, too, when it is his privilege to soothe anxiety and to comfort those in sorrow. Nevertheless, in spite of these and some other cases, silence frequently is wiser and no less effective than speech. Christ calmly and silently standing before the fuming high priest has been



confessed through all the ages the nobler of the two. It falls to almost every one at times to encounter abuse. Bitter accusations are hurled at him, caused perhaps by misunderstandings. To listen in silence often is better evidence than anything else of the actual subjugation of one's temper, and is the most effectual way of disarming an angry adversary.

*Help from considering Christ's endurance.*—When Pollok the poet was a boy, he was of a passionate temper. Sometimes when offended, he allowed himself to fall into a rage, which was so violent that it was very painful to witness. About the age of fifteen a very striking change took place in his temper. This was observed for some time by his friends; and when at length he was questioned on the subject, his answer was, "While perusing the Gospels for myself, I was struck with the meekness and calm dignity of the Saviour under persecution, and I resolved henceforward to command my temper; and since that time, though I may feel anger, nothing ever puts me in a passion."

Ver. 62. *Christ's advent glorg.*—Sometimes perhaps you have passed in the daytime through some public place where at night there was to be a magnificent exhibition of pyrotechnic art, and you have seen the figures that are to be lighted up as they stand ready for the exhibition. They are very plain and common-looking. You can see in the rude outlines the forms of men, the crown upon the kingly brow, and the jewels that flash from it; but there is no beauty and glory whatever about them. But wait till the eventide, till the sun goes down, and the master of ceremonies appears on the scene, and suddenly at the signal, perhaps of a trumpet-blast or a chorus of melody, the lights are turned on and a blaze of glory lights up the scene. Every figure stands out in radiant light, and the whole scene is illuminated, transfigured, and seems almost supernatural. So it will be when our Master appears, and these bodies of humiliation shall be lighted up with His brightness, and all the members shall shine with the beauty and majesty of their living Head, and He shall reveal all His glory in His heavenly bride.

Ver. 66-71. *Unguarded places most liable to attack.*—A one-eyed doe used to graze near the sea, and always kept her blind eye next the water, as she thought her danger would only be from the land. But a poacher, when he discovered this, took a boat and shot her, and as she died the doe exclaimed, "O hard fate! that I should receive my death wound from that side whence I expected no

ill, and be safe in that part where I looked for the most danger."—*Æsop.*

Ver. 72. *God's voice in common things.*—In many ways and by many voices God pleads with us. There was a certain ungodly man who complained bitterly of the church-bell. He could neglect God's service, he could in the insolence of wealth refuse to listen to God's minister, but that bell as it rang forth day by day was echoed by his conscience and would not let him rest. God can make even a little bird preach a sermon for Him.—Once a careless shepherd came down from the plains to waste in revelry and sin his hard-earned wages, and entered one of the cities of Australia. As he passed along the streets a wicker cage caught his eye, from which a captive lark, an English lark, brought across the ocean by some emigrant, was pouring forth its cheerful song; and at once by the magic power of association there came to his memory the old home far away, the village green, the grey church tower, the tender voice of his mother, the good advice of the kind old vicar, and by God's help as he listened he paused, and then turned back determined to lead a better life.—George Macdonald, in his story of *Robert Falconer*, relates a well-authenticated incident of a notorious convict in one of our colonies having been led to reform his ways through going one day into a little church where the matting along the aisle happened to be of the same pattern as that in the church where he had worshipped with his mother when a boy. That old familiar matting recalled the memories of childhood, "the mysteries of the kingdom of innocence" which had long been hidden and overborne by the sins and sufferings of later years. It came to him like the crowing of the cock to Peter. It was the turning-point in his life.—God has blessed the tick of the clock and the falling of a leaf to rouse in man's breast a sense of responsibility. A thousand voices in nature call us to reflexion, but sometimes a simple incident in daily life has done so more effectually. The hard-hearted father who had listened to remonstrance and warning for many a year, was at last touched. He had heard most of the temperance orators of the day, but he continued the drink. One Sunday afternoon he took his little girl to the Sunday school, intending himself to go after more drink. At the door of the school-house he put the child down from his arms, but observed that tears started into her eyes. "Why do you cry?" he asked. The little one sobbed out her answer, "Because you go to public-house, and frighten us when you come home." It was enough. He never entered a public-house again. God can bless simple means to reach great ends.

## CHAPTER XV.

## CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **And the whole council.**—*Even the whole Sanhedrin*, which consisted of the three classes just named—chief priests, elders, and scribes (1 Macc. xiv. 28).

Ver. 2. **Thou sayest it.**—Σὺ λέγεις. This is generally taken as a direct affirmation—an idiomatic or courteous “Yes”; but Prof. Thayer seems to have shewn that it is rather an appeal to the questioner’s own conscience. “Art Thou the King of the Jews?” asked Pilate, half in scorn and half in amusement. “Dost thou say this?” is Christ’s reply; or, as in John xviii. 34, “Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning Me?” See *Expository Times*, vol. vi. No. 10, pp. 437-439.

Ver. 3. **But He answered nothing.**—Omit this clause, imported from Matt. xxvii. 12.

Ver. 6. **Render:** *Now at feast-time he was wont to release unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.* For ὅνπερ ᾔτοῦντο, S, A, B read ὃν παρηγοῦντο, whom they begged off.

Ver. 16. See R.V.

Ver. 17. **Render:** *And they invest Him with “a purple”*—the official robe of kings and rulers, no matter what its colour.

Ver. 21. **Compel.**—*Press into service*: original word is of Persian origin, and denotes the impressment into service which officials were authorised to make to expedite the mails.

Ver. 26. The fact that the inscription was written in three languages is quite enough to account for the slight variations in wording.

Ver. 27. **Thieves.**—*Robbers, or bandits.*

Ver. 28. Wanting in many of the best MSS., but found in all the most ancient versions; therefore probably genuine.

Ver. 43. **Went in boldly.**—*Took courage and went in.*

## MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—15.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxvii. 1, 2, 11-26; LUKE xxiii. 1-7, 13-24;  
JOHN xviii. 28—xix. 16.)

*Christ and Pilate: the True King and His counterfeit.*—The so-called trial of Jesus by the rulers turned entirely on His claim to be Messiah; His examination by Pilate turns entirely on His claim to be King. The two claims are indeed one; but the political aspect is distinguishable from the higher one, and it was the Jewish rulers’ trick to push it exclusively into prominence before Pilate, in the hope that he might see in the claim an incipient insurrection, and might mercilessly stamp it out.

I. **The True King at the bar of the apparent ruler** (vers. 1-6).—Pilate holding Christ’s life in his hand is the crowning paradox of history and the mystery of self-abasing love. One exercise of the Prisoner’s will and His chains would have snapped and the governor lain dead on the marble “pavement.” The two hearings are parallel, and yet contrasted. In each there are two stages—the self-attestation of Jesus, and the accusations of others; but the order is different. The rulers begin with the witnesses, and, foiled there, fall back on Christ’s own answer. Pilate, with Roman directness and a touch of contempt for the accusers, goes straight to the point, and first questions Jesus. His question was simply as to our Lord’s regal pretensions. “Thou a king?”—poor, helpless peasant! A strange specimen of royalty this! How constantly the same blindness is repeated, and the strong things of this world despise the weak, and material power smiles pityingly at the helpless impotence of the principles of Christ’s gospel, which yet will one day shatter it to fragments, like a potter’s vessel! There are plenty of Pilates to-day who judge and misjudge the King of Israel. The silence of Jesus in regard to the eager accusations corresponds

to His silence before the false witnesses. Christ can afford to let many of His foes alone. Contradictions and confutations keep slanders and heresies above water, which the law of gravitation would dispose of, if they were left alone. Pilate's wonder might and should have led him further. It was the little glimmer of light at the far-off end of his cavern, which, travelled towards, might have brought him into free air and broad day. One great part of his crime was neglecting the faint monitions of which he was conscious.

11. **The people's favourite** (vers. 7-15).—"Barabbas" means "son of the father." His very name is a kind of caricature of the "Son of the Blessed," and his character and actions present in gross form the sort of Messiah whom the nation really wanted. The popular hero is like a mirror which reflects the popular mind. He echoes the popular voice, a little improved or exaggerated. Jesus had taught what the people did not care to hear, and given blessings which even the recipients soon forgot, and lived a life whose beauty of holiness oppressed and rebuked the common life of men. What chance had truth and goodness and purity against the sort of bravery that slashes with a sword, and is not elevated by inconvenient reach of thought or beauty of character above the mob? Even now, after nineteen centuries of Christ's influence have modified the popular ideals, what chance have they? Are the popular "heroes" of Christian nations saints, teachers, lovers of men, in whom their Christ-likeness is the thing venerated? That fatal choice revealed the character of the choosers, both in their hostility and admiration; for excellence hated shews what we ought to be and are not, and grossness or vice admired shews what we would fain be if we dared.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*A coward, and what became of him.*—Fix your eyes on Pilate. An o'er close contact with an evil world had ploughed furrows across his face; sensuality had left its impress there. He had come up from Cæsarea a little while ago to keep peace during the great annual festival, for the Jews were a turbulent race. He made his headquarters at the castle of Antonia, and doubtless kept well indoors; for he was the best-hated man in all Jerusalem, and deserved it. On the morning of this April day he was awakened early by a beating at his gates. He doubtless arose from his couch with reluctance and muttering maledictions on these troublesome Jews. They had brought a prisoner for trial. Last night, at the conclave of the Sanhedrin, He was accused of blasphemy, of making Himself equal with God. But no Roman magistrate would take cognisance of a theological indictment. So they must needs trump up charges against Him. First, He had perverted the nation. Second, He had forbidden payment of tribute to the emperor. Third, He had proclaimed Himself as a king. Pilate must determine upon this case: there was no escape. And you, friend, must also decide what you will do with Jesus who is called the Christ.

I. **Now mark the circumstances which aggravated his cowardice.**—1. He had heard about Jesus and knew Him. His wonderful work and words and name were in the air. He had had, moreover, an interview with Jesus. He had asked Him, "Art thou a king?" And Jesus answered, "Thou sayest it; but My kingdom is not of this world—I am come to reign in the province of truth." So he knew about Him. What will he do with Him? 2. He had been warned concerning Him. Not only had his conscience rung the alarm—as conscience warns us all—but a special admonition had been given him. His wife Procula had dreamed in the waking hours of the morning—the hour when Israel thought all dreams came true—and tradition tells us the dream. She saw a conflagration that consumed homes and temples and palaces, licked up forests, and burned the heavens like a parched scroll, so that nothing could extinguish it. There were cries of the homeless and fear-stricken and dying.



Then a lamb appeared, and as it lifted its eyes all sounds were hushed. It mounted the flaming pyre; its side was pierced, blood gushed forth, and the fires were quenched. Then the lamb assumed human form, and the appearance was, as the dreamer said,

"Of a Man Divine and passing fair,  
And like your august Prisoner there."

Therefore she said, "Do no harm to that just Man." 3. Pilate's cowardice was aggravated by his attempts at evasion and compromise. He entreated the people, "Why, what evil hath He done?" He might as well have sung a lullaby to a cyclone. "Crucify Him!" was the answer. "Crucify Him!" And then he sent Him to Herod—a happy thought. But Herod would not be responsible for the decision of this perplexing case; so he sent the Prisoner back. Pilate must judge Him; so must you and I. Here is this Jesus; and what will he do with Him? A great problem confronts him. He said, "I will chastise Him and let Him go." Oh, shame upon him for a Roman magistrate! The Man is either guilty or innocent. If guilty, He should die the death; if innocent, let Him go. Compromise never pays. "Nothing is settled until it is settled right." No man nor Church, no pastor nor teacher, can afford to split the difference in spiritual things.

11. But what was the occasion of this man's cowardice? -1. To begin with, he was a trifier. He lived in an age of cynicism; the foundations of religion were broken up. He had mingled with the soldiers at the camp-fire, cracking jokes about the gods and making sport of sacred things. And now, facing this Divine Truth-giver, the irony of his retort—"What is truth?"—was but the outcome of his pernicious habit. Some of you, perhaps, have been wont to trifle in like manner. But we cannot make light of any serious matter without ultimately paying for it. 2. He had no opinions of his own. He went to the people, to his wife, to the priests, for advice. Oh, man, think for thyself! It behoves us to have convictions of our own. Let us live by them, stand for them, and be willing in their defence, if need be, to die. If ever we are in doubt, we have a sure Counsellor (Jas. i. 5). 3. Another reason for Pilate's cowardice was his sycophancy. At all hazards he must be Caesar's friend. What was the result? A little while after Tiberius was off the throne and Caligula was on. And Caligula said, "Go bring me Pilate; he must answer to certain charges concerning an aqueduct, a Roman standard, and a murder at the altar." And a little later Pilate was an exile and a wanderer.

111. Let us not be too hard upon Pilate, for there may be some moral cowards among us. Let me give you a parting word, the motto of the Guthrie family, "Sto pro veritate." Let us stand for the truth, the truth against the world. There is nothing better than that. We are all in Pilate's place. The Lord Jesus stands in judgment before us. What are you going to do with Him? Will you meet Him with mock heroics, admiration of His manhood and rejection of His Divine claim? Out upon all mere sentimentalism! Let us be logical and sensible. Christ was what He claimed to be, or else an impostor who deserved to die.—D. J. Burrell, D.D.

*Personal conviction and popular clamour.* - This Jewish scene, so important in the world's life, introduces us to a very serious subject, involving moral and religious questions—the rule or prevalence of the majority. The theory that every man has a voice and vote in the arrangement of things, and that that arrangement shall be according to the opinion which combines the greatest number of those votes or voices, is almost universal. It seems to embody the only principle upon which a decision has any justice, or is binding at all. It encourages activity, free thought, and discussion, and the individual personal

interests of us all. And yet we are sorely perplexed about it at times. We feel that the voices of the majority often mean nothing at all, and should have no weight—that is, they are mere empty noise, behind which there is no truth, but only ignorance, or only a half-truth, destructive in its mutilated state. When, then, ought the many voices to prevail?

**I. When the responsibility of decision and action is to belong to the many whose voices are heard.**—If a company of travellers are to choose between certain plans or paths of journeying, and no one person has or is to have the responsibility, and the success or disappointment will not be visited upon any one member, but all are interested and will bear the blame or praise of the future action, then a vote of the entire companionship is taken. Their decision may be wrong in itself, but it is right that it should have been so made. Now in the case of our text it was not so. The multitude had nothing to do with the judging or deciding. It was an individual matter between Pilate and Christ. And so it is with each of us. Every quiet moment of conviction, when we stand face to face with Christ and His pure cross-marked religion, and debate anxiously the question, “Shall I decide for or against Him?” is a reproduction of the interviews of Pilate and Jesus at the inner judgment-seat. We should decide in a moment for Jesus, if it were not that other voices enter in. They control the sentence, and we bear the responsibility and results of it. Oh, think of it! That empty-tongued crowd of fashion or society, which cries down your single heart’s voice—that hard-voiced throng of money-seekers, which shames and silences your warm conviction for the Lord—that false, smooth-toned multitude of unbelievers, which surround you and ply you with their infidel voices and sneers and arguments, and chill your spiritual aspirations,—you can never fasten the blame upon them. They will only mock at you when the results come. They will say, “It is none of our matter.” And it will be true.

**II. In a matter of fact, in the testimony of experience.**—The more witnesses to a fact of experience that can be brought, the better for the truth, whoever has to decide it. But now turn to this story of Pilate again. What sort of voices did he listen to and allow to prevail? Did they bring the overwhelming weight of experience against him? Was that what controlled and turned his decision? No, he knew that those chief priests cried for crucifixion out of envy. He knew that his own experience of Christ, that his comprehension and appreciation of Him, was something of which this crowd had nothing. They should never have prevailed. If you have felt the truth of Christ’s love to you only for a moment—if you have felt His purity by the side of your sin in one quick instant of repentant experience—if you have once felt His gentle yet complete kingliness by the side of false earthly power,—there is a voice of experience within you over which all voices of men who have seen and learnt no such facts should never prevail. Oh, if a man’s moral self and God’s Spirit insist upon being heard together, and above all else, it is not obstinacy, but firmness of purpose; it is the strongest condition of man; it is the richest of life’s harmonies—man’s voice and God’s voice at one.—*F. Brooks.*

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

**Ver. 1. Activity in evil.**—While honest men lay them down in peace and take their rest, suspecting no harm because they mean none, thieves and robbers are up and abroad, spreading their nets for the prey and watching

to do mischievously. “The devil’s martyrs,” saith Bernard, “are more swift in running to hell than we to heaven.” How slack are we to do God any service! how backward to suffer anything for Him! And how

they, on the other side, can bestir them to serve the devil, and be content to suffer a kind of martyrdom in his service! The way, sure, is broad enough and easy enough that leadeth to destruction; yet so much pains is there taken to find it, that I verily believe half the pains many a man taketh to go to hell, if it had been well bestowed, would have brought him to heaven.—*Bishop Sanderson.*

*Jesus delivered to Pilate.*—What a spectacle was that! The heads of the Jewish nation leading their own Messiah in chains to deliver Him up to a Gentile governor, with the petition that He should be put to death! Shades of the heroes and the prophets, who loved the nation and boasted of it and foretold its glorious fate, the hour of destiny has come, and this is the result! It was an act of national suicide. But was it not more? Was it not the frustration of the purpose and the promise of God? So it certainly appeared to be. Yet He is not mocked. Even through human sin His purpose holds on its way. The Jews brought the Son of God to Pilate's judgment-seat, that both Jew and Gentile might unite in condemning Him; for it was part of the work of the Redeemer to expose human sin, and here was to be exhibited the *ne plus ultra* of wickedness, as the hand of humanity was lifted up against its Maker. And yet that death was to be the life of humanity; and Jesus, standing between Jew and Gentile, was to unite them in the fellowship of a common salvation.—*J. Stalker, D.D.*

*Why was Jesus taken to Pilate?*—The common opinion, that the Romans had deprived the Jews of the power to inflict capital punishment, would seem to be erroneous; for we learn from the Acts that the Sanhedrin put St. Stephen and others to death. The truth probably is, that the Pharisees, who were the chief instigators of our Lord's death, were averse to the shedding of Jewish blood by the Sanhedrin, and preferred to throw the odium of His execution upon the Romans. The Sadducees, who took the lead in the

persecution of the early Christians, had no such scruples.

*Ver. 2. Avowal and description of kingship.*—Never answering the dishonest attack, the Saviour always answered the honest inquiry. Here He explicitly avows that He is "a king"—the King, according to the fuller reply recorded by John, of more than Jews; and, according to that account, He intimates His kingship (John xviii. 36) to be other than worldly royalties, not employing force and fighting men, but that His kingship is the royalty which invests all who can testify the truth, and invests Him as the Truth, as the Great Revealer of God, of duty, of mercy, of hope. There is no sort of kingliness like this.—*R. Glover.*

*Vers. 3-5. The silence of Jesus* proceeds from His owning all our crimes before His Father, His only lawful judge. Concern, passion, fear of death, love of reputation, and desire to be justified, make an accused person speak who has nothing at liberty but his tongue; but even the tongue itself of Christ is not at liberty, being under a kind of confinement from His meekness, His patience, His wisdom, His humility, His obedience, and His quality of victim, which make Him even in love with shame and with the Cross.—*P. Quesnel.*

*The silence of Jesus.*—Much is said, and well said, on the teaching of Jesus—His manner and method as a speaker; how independent He was of times and circumstances; and how, in His peasant's garb, and by the hill-side or the river-shore, He forced the confession from His hearers, "Never man spake like this man!" He was troubled by no interruption. He was always ready to bear questionings, and no teacher was ever so patient to repeat himself so long as repetition promised anything. But *there* was the limit. When speech was useless, He was silent. The prudence of Jesus is seen in His keeping silence, and never more so than where He answered



no more questions or thrusts. And the governor marvelled greatly. Pilate marvelled because he knew Jesus *could* speak. He knew the power with which He could plead the cause of truth. He knew the influence He had exerted by His eloquence. He knew these accusations came because of the power which the wonderful Teacher had exerted by His speech. He did not keep dumb because He had no words, nor because He was unused to discussion, nor because He could not bear the presence of these ecclesiastical dignitaries. Discussion and they were familiar to Him; but He had to practise the instructions He had given to His disciples. He had forbidden them to throw pearls where they would find no gold setting; and where there was only talk and no heart, He bade them leave the place and go elsewhere. He had not only taught this, but He had practised it. Many instances you will find which illustrate that so soon as He discovered that the disposition of the people was wrong He retired, and in silence found confidence and strength. And there in Pilate's hall, accused and scorned, He who could wake the dead and still the sea, who could blast the unproductive fig tree whose life was expressed only in leaves, and who could open the deaf ear and bid the dumb to speak—He in the hour of mortal peril was silent. There He stood—still as the stars dropping their crystal light—still as the grass springs and the blossoms unfold—still as the subtlest forces of nature speed on their way—still as the footsteps of God, when He visits specially the human soul—still as the spirit goes to the resurrection. The example of Jesus in reference to the time to keep silent must not be lost upon us. We sometimes forget that the world is not wholly ruled by talk, that it is not possible at all times to find an unperverting hearing, and we need the discipline of silence. To Jesus let us go for an example in reference to the times and seasons of silence; and then in the difficult passes of life we

shall say our word calmly, solemnly, truthfully, and leave the issues with God, not doubting the fidelity of His providence.—*Henry Bacon.*

*Silence under misconception.*—There still are few, even under the tuition of the example of Christ, who can preserve this supreme silence. It is not altogether easy, even for the wisest and the best, to be serenely contented to be misunderstood—to let their thought quietly grow, their good intention gradually become known of all men, their larger plan, their higher purpose, their prophetic anticipation of the world-age next to come, wait its hour, while they themselves may be regarded as unbelievers, or looked upon as visionaries, or hardly tolerated as dangerous Christian teachers; and they themselves may not expect to live to see the larger good in which some day their thought and toil may find beneficent fruitions. And if silence under misconception is no easy virtue always even for the wisest and the best, it is a spiritual gift not even coveted by the great mass of men and women whom the slightest misunderstanding may irritate into bitter speech and the least provocation cause to bristle up in offensive self-assertion. The millennium can hardly be expected to come even to the best society until men and women shall have mastered more humbly and unselfishly the secret of this personal silence of the Christ. His conduct in this particular seems the more remarkable when we consider what powers of commanding speech He possessed, had He been pleased to exercise them in His own behalf. What a vindication, had He pleased, He might have given of His life as the Son of Man, when the Jews falsely accused Him before Pilate of making Himself a king in Cæsar's place! What glorious argument of His doctrine He might have spoken when Herod asked Him many questions! What sublime apology for His life as the Divine Servant of men He might have left for disciples to publish to the coming ages after He should have

suffered a martyr's death! Yet He chose a kinglier silence for His record, and Heaven's approval for His crown. He could wait, He alone of the great powers of our human history, until the glory of the Father which He had from the beginning should be manifested, and in His name all be reconciled.—*N. Smyth, D.D.*

Ver. 10. *The envy of the chief priests.*—Christ's earthly life was in many respects so unenviable that the thought of envy at first occasions surprise. He had no advantage of wealth or station. His limited successes in preaching the gospel of His kingdom were chiefly among poor and despised classes. How came it, then, that rich and haughty Sadducees envied Him? The truth is, that envy is a passion of blacker face than the mere feeling of disquiet at sight of the worldly successes of others. The heart that is apart from God and unreconciled to Him, lacking a worthy object for its affection, is a prey to unrest. Sometimes it must needs be discontented. And then the sight of spiritual peace and happiness in others awakens that sense of lack and that pain of contrast which we call envy. It may be hardly more than a tinge of feeling, or it may grow to be a dominant and malignant passion. Lord Bacon said: "A man that hath no virtue in himself ever envieth virtue in others, for men's minds will either feed upon their own good or upon others' evil; and who wanteth the one will prey upon the other; and whoso is out of hope to attain another's virtue will seek to come at even hand by depressing another's fortune."

*The choice of alternatives.*—Tinworth has graphically reproduced this scene in clay, and called it "The World's Choice." He thus treats it not only as an historic but also as a typical fact. It expresses the spirit of the world. Note a few of the many elements in it. 1. Hatred of Rome and a desire to perplex Pilate. 2. Sympathy with the man who had lifted up his hand against the hateful rule of Rome and her

representatives. 3. Bitter resentment against Christ for His scathing words in cleansing the Temple, and His daring deeds in scourging unholy traffickers. 4. The infectious influence of raging passion, or the feverish and mad frenzy of a crowd. 5. The felt inconvenience of being in the minority.—*D. Davies.*

*The tragedy of Pilate's life.*—There was nothing to signalise him; he was no bad example of an average Roman governor. In a few months he might have retired from his post, to end his days in the merciful obscurity which has closed over the remains of thousands such as he. But the pathetic tragedy of his life lies in this: that suddenly, by accident (as we speak), without any wish or choice or consent of his own, unasked, unwarned, surprised, he is found to be placed at the very hour and centre of the sharpest and fiercest crisis that the world has ever seen. The heat of the great battle surges with abrupt vehemence, with furious emphasis, round the spot where he happens to stand. It is the hour of all hours, and he is in the very thick of its awful pressure before he is aware of it, before he can take its measure. Unexpected, uncalculated, the eternal war has swung his way—the war between good and evil, God and devil—the death-struggle for the world's redemption. Round him the forces of the spiritual strife surge and swell. In a moment he is caught up into them, as into a whirlpool—round and round they eddy, they storm, they howl; they clamour for a decision from him—a decision swift, momentous, vital. "Yes or no."—*Canon Scott-Holland.*

Ver. 12. *The parting of the ways.*—It is very easy and respectable to place Pilate in our thoughts upon a pedestal of infamy; but are we sufficiently alive to the fact that our responsibility is as great? We have to pursue a certain course in regard to Christ. There are two main divergent roads, and only two. We must side with the mob, we must belie our own conscience, as Pilate did; or we must yield Him our allegi-

ance, and crown Him with our love. Yet, of course, there are degrees in partisanship. The relations of men to Christ may be more elaborately described. 1. For example, you may *put Christ off*. Thousands do that without the slightest thought of dying infidels, and finally and deliberately rejecting the Christian gospel. But, oh, remember postponement is distinct action! For the time being it is final. 2. Or you may *patronise* Him. You may clothe Him in the fine robe of genteel respect; you may support the institutions of religion that bear His name; you may never speak against Him—you may even speak up for His Church. How high a value, think you, does Christ place upon this kind of support? 3. Or, again, you may *sell* Christ. You love money. But, it may be, you cannot make money as you have been making it and place Him on the throne of your heart. You are in sight of a big success; you have only to square your conscience and the thing will be done. Oh! face the situation boldly, know distinctly what you are going to do with Jesus which is called Christ! 4. Or, once more, you may *boycott* Him. In your heart of hearts you acknowledge His claim; yet you never seem to know Christ in society. You never speak of Him, you never honour Him, you never stand up for Him, you treat Him like a poor relation of whom you are ashamed. Now, is not each of these expedients the selection of a way? Is it not the adoption of a party? Is it not enlistment on one side of the great struggle? The most obvious and important lesson from this incident in Pilate's history is the impossibility of shirking spiritual responsibilities.—*R. B. Brindley.*

*A crisis in Pilate's life.*—Quite apart from that which is at stake, it is a terrible picture of a man, by no means

all bad, driven by bold, bad men to do a dreadful deed, a deed from which his heart and his conscience and his honour each in turn recoil, a deed which has made the name of Pontius Pilate stand out in lurid letters as no other name ever named among men stands out, as no other name ever can stand out. It was not, you must notice, the first or the second time that Pilate had been defeated in the attempt to carry out his will by the determination of the Jews. He knew well what they were. His was the famous order which sent into the Holy City the standards of the Roman soldiers with the desecrating image of the emperor; and after one device and another had failed, after he had tried persuasion, and had tried the threat and the shew of violence, they made him withdraw the order. He it was who hung up in the palace of the Roman governor shields inscribed with the names of the Roman deities; but here, great as was the outrage to the Jews, he remained firm, and had to bear the indignity of a special order from Tiberius to remove them. In both of those cases he was wrong from the first and throughout, and he had to give way,—in the one case to submit; in the other, in the case which fills our thoughts to-day, he strove to do what was right, and he had to give way, as before. It is a terrible warning to a weak man in a place of responsibility.—*Canon G. F. Browne.*

*Pilate's weakness.*—"Poor mockery of a ruler," one has said, "set by the Eternal to do right upon the earth and afraid to do it! Told so by his own bosom; strong enough in his legions, and in the truth itself, to have saved the Innocent One and kept his own soul,—he could only think of the apparently expedient. Type of the politician of all ages who forgets that only the right is the strong or wise."



MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16—20.

(PARALLEL: MATT. xxvii. 27-31.)

*The Son of God mocked and wounded.*—Solar eclipses are not miraculous appearances. Men acquainted with the situations and revolutions of the celestial orbs foretell these appearances. The humiliation of the Son of God is the eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness. Infamy and reproach covered Him in the days of His flesh, and toward the end of these days intercepted His rays, hiding, like a dark body, the brightness of His glory from the eyes of the world. Foreseeing this, a prophet says, "His visage was so marred more than any man," etc.; and relating this, an apostle says, "Who being in the form of God," etc. The obscuration of the Sun of Righteousness in His humiliation was not, however, a total eclipse. A prophet foretells one day that shall be "not day nor night," the light being not clear nor dark, but a mixture of both qualities. So is the light of the Sun of Righteousness in His humiliation; and in looking down to Him at this period, we behold an unparalleled mixture of light and shade, of glory and infamy, of honour and dishonour, and of beauty, meanness, and shame.

**I. Concerning the Sufferer.**—1. The Sufferer is the Son of the Highest. "The Highest" is one of the lofty titles which distinguish and exalt the living and true God; and "the Son of the Highest" is a glorious title, with which, according to the prediction of Gabriel, the Saviour of the world is honoured. The real import of it is given by the apostle when he affirms Him to be "the brightness of glory, and the express image of the Father." Every perfection essential to the Father dwells bodily and essentially in the Son; and the singular titles, "Own Son," "Dear Son," "Beloved Son," "Only Begotten Son," exalt Him above creatures, and equal Him to the Highest. 2. The Sufferer is the Kinsman of the human race. To a part of our race the Lord Jesus bears a special relation, but He dwells in the nature common to the whole. Partaking of flesh and blood, of which all, as well as the children, are partakers, every man under heaven, upon the revelation of Him, is warranted to call Him kinsman. 3. The Sufferer is the Undertaker for the elect. All that the precept of the law of works required to be done by them He undertook to perform, and what its penalty denounced He engaged Himself to bear. Nor hath He failed in either. The satisfaction which by suffering and dying He made is the shield that protects them from its vengeance. 4. The Sufferer is the Horn of Salvation which God raised up in the house of David. The horn of an animal is its weapon, both for defence and vengeance. With this it defends itself, and with this it pushes down the enemy. In some prophecies horn is an emblem of the power of a king and the strength of his kingdom, and with the highest propriety is transferred to the Lamb of God, in whose office the powers of salvation and destruction are vested, and in whose administration these powers are exerted. The horns of the bulls of Bashan were not able to break the horn of the Lamb. 5. The Sufferer is the Author and Finisher of faith. In His own exercise He is the Prince and Leader who goes before believers, and who, in trusting and hoping Himself, leaves them a finished and perfect pattern of trust and hope. 6. The Sufferer is the Sun of Righteousness, or Light of the World. In His birth He was deeply obscured. From His agony and seizure in the garden to His death and resurrection this glorious Sun was thought to be totally eclipsed. His visage was marred, His face discoloured with spittle, His head crowned with thorns, His back furrowed with cords, and His hands and feet pierced with nails. But

under this darkness the title Sun of Righteousness existed, and through it light beams upon the world.

**II. Concerning the indignities which our Lord suffered.**—These are related in the text without colouring and without reflexions. The holy writer neither praises the fortitude and glory of the Sufferer, nor reprobates the baseness and inhumanity of the wicked by whom He was abused. Facts are truly stated in the relation, and simplicity is rigidly observed. 1. When made under the law, our Lord subjected Himself to the suffering of these indignities. 2. In suffering the insolences of the ungodly our Lord was not ashamed and confounded. Behold the Sufferer, not a desponding and cowardly but a bold and mighty Sufferer, whose back, furrowed by the lash, and covered with the scarlet robe, upheld the universe—whose countenance, marred with shame and spitting, was harder than flint and bolder than Lebanon—and whose faith, assailed and affronted by every indignity, stood firmer than the pillars of heaven and earth! Trusting in God, and beholding the joy set before Him, He despised the shame, endured the pain, and triumphed over the diversion and wantonness of wickedness and inhumanity. 3. The Lord Jesus suffered these indignities for and instead of the elect. Indignation at the rudeness and brutality of the soldiers is not the only passion which the record of these abuses should kindle in our breasts. Rather it should kindle indignation against ourselves, for whose iniquities He submitted to abuse. 4. The suffering of these indignities was a part of the ransom which our Kinsman gave for the redemption of the elect. Redemption is an expensive undertaking; none but Himself was equal to it, and it cost Him dear. 5. In suffering these indignities our Lord Jesus left us an example that we should follow His steps.

**III. Concerning the glory of Christ in suffering these indignities.**—The sacred writer relates His sufferings without revealing His glory. But by the light of other parts of Scripture we behold it; and without a display of it the knowledge of the fellowship of His sufferings could not be attained. 1. In suffering these indignities the glory of His faith and trust appears bright and resplendent. Unmoved, undismayed, unashamed, He stood firm, and without fainting held fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. 2. In the common hall, where the Lord Jesus suffered the indignities, the glory of His love appears in splendour and dignity. Observe the scarlet robe, the reed, and the crown of thorns; behold the vilest ruffians bowing the knee, striking, reviling, and spitting upon the Blessed and Only Potentate, and say, "Behold how He loved us!" 3. In suffering the reproaches and indignities of the ungodly glory appears in the zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ. 4. In suffering the indignities and insolences of the wicked the humility of the Lord Jesus is glorious. Found in fashion as a man, they treated Him not as a man, but trampled on Him as a worm. Astonishing humiliation! Astonishing, indeed, when we consider that He humbled Himself so low to declare the righteousness of God, in "raising up the poor out of the dust, and lifting up the beggar" and the criminal "from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." 5. In suffering the insolences of brutish men the meekness of Jesus Christ is glorious. The testimony of the false witnesses He heard in silence. The rudeness of the wicked, who spit in His face, and buffeted Him, and smote Him with the palms of their hands, He endured with composure. The derision and pain in the common hall He suffered with boldness and mildness. Nothing defective appeared in His temper, His language, nor in His behaviour. 6. In suffering the insolences and abuses of men the patience of Jesus Christ is glorious. "He suffered, but threatened not"—suffered not with stoical apathy and sullen and philosophical pride, but with bold tranquillity and reverential and humble and holy composure. 7. In

suffering the resignation of the Lord Jesus is glorious. As the hour of suffering approached a conflict was felt—a conflict not between sin and grace, but between the weakness of His human nature and the strength and glory of His grace; while at the same time resignation triumphed (John xii. 27). Another conflict was in His agony, when resignation also triumphed (Mark xiv. 36). The palm, the scourge, the reed, the thorn, the purple, the spittle, the cross, and the nails were bitter and painful infusions; yet these, all these dregs, He submitted to wring out and drink.

**Lessons.**—1. The harmony between the predictions of prophets and the relations of evangelists concerning the sufferings of Christ is obvious and striking. 2. In His person and office the Lord Jesus is inconceivably glorious. “Brightness of Glory” is one of His distinguishing titles. 3. The grand design of revelation is to manifest the glory of Christ in His person—God-man. 4. The various representations which have been made of the person, sufferings, and glory of Christ are suitable means of working in believers a lively frame of heart for shewing His death at His table. 5. The various representations exhibited of the person, sufferings, and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ lead to the satisfactory answer of a question of the highest importance to the unbelieving, the ungodly, and the unholy. “What must we do to be saved?” Behold, O perishing and helpless creatures! behold the Doer and the Sufferer! To the Doer and Sufferer thou must be united, betrothed, and joined, and married. Obey His voice, and receive His grace; believe in His name, and rejoice in His salvation.—*A. Shanks.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 17-19. *Lessons from the mockery of the soldiers.*—1. Notice it the conduct of the tormentors of Jesus the abuse of one of the gifts of God. Laughter is a kind of spice which the Creator has given to be taken along with the somewhat unpalatable food of ordinary life. But when directed against sacred things and holy persons, when used to belittle and degrade what is great and reverend, when employed as a weapon with which to torture weakness and cover innocence with ridicule, then, instead of being the foam on the cup of the banquet of life, it becomes a deadly poison. Laughter guided these soldiers in their inhuman acts; it concealed from them the true nature of what they were doing; and it wounded Christ more deeply than even the scourge of Pilate. 2. It was against the kingly office of the Redeemer that the opposition of men was directed on this occasion. The soldiers considered it an absurdity and a joke that one apparently so mean, friend-

less, and powerless should make any such pretensions. Many a time since then has the same derision been awakened by this claim of Christ. He is the King of nations. But earthly kings and statesmen have ridiculed the idea that His will and His law should control them in their schemes and ambitions. Even where His authority is nominally acknowledged, both aristocracies and democracies are slow to recognise that their legislation and customs should be regulated by His words. Most vital of all is the acknowledgment of Christ's kingship in the realm of the individual life; but it is here that His will is most resisted. 3. In what Jesus bore on this occasion. He was suffering for us. Thorns were the sign of the curse. And does not the thorn, staring from the naked bough of winter in threatening ugliness, lurking beneath the leaves or flowers of summer to wound the approaching hand, tearing the clothes or the flesh of the traveller who tries to make his way through



the thicket, burning in the flesh where it has sunk, fitly stand for that side of life which we associate with sin—the side of care, fret, pain, disappointment, disease, and death? In a word, it symbolises the curse. But it was the mission of Christ to bear the curse; and as He lifted it on His own head, He took it off the world. 4. Christ's sufferings are a rebuke to our softness and self-pleasing. It is not, indeed, wrong to enjoy the comforts and the pleasures of life. God sends these, and if we receive them with gratitude they may lift us nearer to Himself. But we are too terrified to be parted from them, and too afraid of pain and poverty. Many would like to be Christians, but are kept back from decision by dread of the laughter of profane companions or by the prospect of some worldly loss. But we cannot look at the suffering Saviour without being ashamed of such cowardly fears. —*J. Stalker, D.D.*

*Christ was intended for the whole world.*—Let us see the Divine intention in the Crucifixion. In that are mingling lines of glory and of humiliation. The King of humanity appears with a scarlet camp-mantle flung contemptuously over His shoulders; but to the eye of faith it is the purple of empire. He is crowned with the acanthus wreath; but the wreath of mockery is the royalty of our race. He is crucified between two thieves; but His Cross is a judgment-throne, and at His right hand and His left are the two separated worlds of belief and unbelief. All the Evangelists tell us that a superscription, a title of accusation, was written over His Cross; two of them add that it was written over Him “in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew” (or in Hebrew, Greek, Latin). In Hebrew,—the sacred tongue of patriarchs and seers, of the nation all whose members were in idea and destination those of whom God said, “My prophets.” In Greek,—the “musical and golden tongue which gave a soul to the objects of sense and a body to the abstractions of philo-

sophy”; the language of a people whose mission it was to give a principle of fermentation to all races of mankind, susceptible of those subtle and largely indefinable influences which are called collectively Progress. In Latin,—the dialect of a people originally the strongest of all the sons of men. The three languages represent the three races and their ideas,—revelation, art, literature; progress, war, and jurisprudence. Wherever these three tendencies of the human race exist, wherever annunciation can be made in human language, wherever there is a heart to sin, a tongue to speak, and eye to read, the Cross has a message.—*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*

Ver. 17. *The crown of thorns.*—The imposition of the mock crown was only one among many indignities. It was not only a mock crown, but a circlet of torture.

**I. To wear this crown Christ had laid aside that of Divine majesty.**—We can pity the fallen and weep for the great who are degraded, or who are made to feel the hardship of reversed fortune—we can measure the depth of the descent because they are human; but we have no power to gauge the height from which He came when He “humbled Himself and became obedient unto death.”

**II. By wearing this crown of mockery Christ added a glory to that He wears eternally.**—He conquered suffering, sorrow, death, for us, and now every branch and spike of the mock crown is a jewel inwrought with that of His Divine majesty. Thus the very scorn of man Christ transforms into the sign of Divine regal power.

**III. By wearing the mock crown Christ gained the further right to bestow a crown of life on all the faithful.**

**IV. Consider the power Christ gained over human souls by wearing that mock crown.**—1. Men are led to mourn the guilt that brought Him such pain. 2. He gains such intense affection as He could have obtained

in no other way. We should not have loved mere majesty or power, however great; but Jesus we can love as God manifest in the flesh. "The love of Christ constraineth."—*Anon.*

*The crown of thorns.*—In the thorns composing the Redeemer's crown we see reflected—1. The true character of sin as the deadly curse in the life and history of man. 2. The triumphant conquest and carrying away of sin. 3. The glorious transformation of the consequences of sin. 4. A symbol of Christ's work. Crowned with thorns! Oh the deep disgrace to those who did it! Yet what so pathetically appropriate, what so beautifully significant, that at the close and climax of such a life as His, full of travail of soul and agony of spirit, bitterness and reproach of men and devils and sin's burden, there should be placed on His head a crown such as should be the expression and picture of it all! Jesus Christ, the ideal King of humanity, who shall yet be historic King, found His kingdom "lying in the beast" of prejudice and passion, and ever since with kingly courage He has been engaged in lifting it into the "beauty of the Lord"—bitter, heart-breaking, thorny work.—*W. B. Melville.*

*The crown of thorns.*—I. Jesus Christ claimed the highest dignity: "King."

—Proved by—1. His own words and deeds. 2. The service of angels. 3. The dread of demons. 4. The phenomena of nature. 5. The appearance of the departed. 6. The acknowledgment of God.

II. The claim of Christ to the highest dignity was treated with contempt.—"Crown of thorns." 1. Its reason. (1) Its ordinary human appearance. (2) The spirituality of His kingdom. (3) The preconceived notions of men. 2. Its form. Mockery and pain. This arose from—(1) A cruel occupation: "soldiers." (2) Servile obedience. (3) Heathenish cruelty. (4) Example of superiors. (5) Sinful excitement.

III. Contempt for the claim of Christ to the highest dignity was overruled to the advantage of Christ. — 1. Suffering revealed His greatness. Love, patience, forgiveness. 2. Greatness gave value to His sufferings. Sufferings of the God-man, dignity of Godhead, and sufferings of manhood—atonement. The "curse" represented by the "thorns" becomes a blessing represented by the "crown of thorns."—*B. D. Johns.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21—41.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxvii. 32-56; LUKE xxiii. 26-49; JOHN xix. 17-37.)

*Lessons from Calvary.* I. Let us be willing to bear the cross for Him who bore the cross for us (ver. 21). They compel Simon to bear His cross. It was a reproach, and none would do it but by compulsion. "We must not think it strange if crosses come upon us suddenly, and we be surprised by them." The cross represents the sufferings which we are called upon to bear as Christians. "Cross-bearing and self-forgetfulness fitly go together (as in Matt. xvi. 24); for he that will not deny himself the pleasures of sin and the advantages of the world for Christ, when it comes to the push will never have the heart to take up his cross." In running the race set before us there is often a cross in the way—something which is not only not joyous, but even grievous. This is no mournful aspect of discipleship; for if we are willing to bear the cross for Christ, we shall be thereby brought into closer fellowship with Christ.

II. The place of death to Him is the beginning of life to us (ver. 22).—"Once a Golgotha, Calvary has ceased to be a place of skulls. Where men went once to die they go now to live." There was opened the fountain for sin

and uncleanness—for your sins and mine, for the sins of the whole world. Have you been to the place called Calvary?

III. **The manner of death He endured for us shews with what manner of love He loved us** (ver. 24).—Crucifixion was regarded as the appropriate punishment for the most infamous characters. “The cross being placed in position, the victim was within reach of every hand that might choose to strike a blow, and near enough also to note every gesture of insult, and to hear every mocking word levelled at him.” Yet for us, for our salvation, Christ was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The rocks rent asunder when Jesus died; and surely our hearts must be harder than granite if the story of the Cross fail to touch them. Christ died for the ungodly, and He will not see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied until every heart is renewed, as it has been redeemed.

IV. **The cruel challenge** (vers. 29-32).—Could our Lord’s enemies but have grasped the truth comprehended in their sarcastic taunt, tears of gratitude would have dimmed their eyes as they learned that Christ had voluntarily laid by the power He possessed to save Himself, that by His death the way might be opened for fallen man to return to God. In wilful and therefore criminal ignorance the terrible act of crucifixion was sanctioned and carried out. It is possible for men to be fulfilling Scripture prophecies even when they are breaking Scripture precepts.

V. **The two signs**—light at birth, and darkness at death (ver. 33). At the Saviour’s birth heaven’s host rejoiced and the dazzling lustre of the glory of the Lord was manifest. At the Saviour’s death the prophecy was fulfilled, “I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.” So awestruck were the people that one heathen writer said concerning it, “There was a general belief that either the God of nature was suffering, or the machine of the world was tumbling to ruin.”

VI. **The cry of a Saviour’s agony** (ver. 34).—It is as though He had said, “I could have borne all else—the being despised and rejected of men; I could have endured the outward pain, the bodily anguish; but oh! My Father, Thy smile has been My light, Thy presence and fellowship My joy. Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” We have here the summit of human bliss—“My God! My God!” We have here the lowest depth of human woe—the being God-forsaken.

VII. **Triumph in death** (ver. 37).—He commended His soul to God and expired. He triumphed in death at Calvary. So may we.

VIII. **The signification of the rent veil** (ver. 38).—The kingdom of heaven is open to all believers. We may now draw near in full assurance of faith; for we may boldly “enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil—that is to say, His flesh.”—*S. Oliver.*

Ver. 25. *The Son of God nailed to the Cross.*—Upon the crucifixion of a good man Xenophon or Livy would have lavished all the stores of descriptive language, loaded the memory of the murderers with every indignant epithet, and honoured the virtue and heroism of the sufferer with the highest applause. Mark despatches his history of the crucifixion of the Son of God in one word, saying, with apparent coolness and bold simplicity, “And they crucified Him.” Taught to record the deed and suppress the reflexion, he hath, however, given the world all that faith desires for a foundation, a fact under the hand and seal of the Spirit of truth.

I. **The crucifiers.**—I. Israelites and Gentiles, the two great divisions of men at that time, took part in it; the agency of both was criminal, though not equally criminal. “He that delivered Me to thee,” said our Lord to the



Roman governor, "hath the greater sin." The agency of Judas and Caiaphas was more criminal than the agency of Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the Gentiles were less blamable than the people of Israel. By the hands of wicked men Christ was crucified and slain, but their wicked hands did that which the righteous counsel of God determined before to be done. The determination of His counsel was just and holy; the deed of the ungodly assembly who executed it was wicked and unjust. 2. The crucifiers knew not what they did. Ignorance, though neither the justification nor the excuse of wickedness, is an alleviation pleadable in applications to the throne for pardon.

**II. The Crucified.**—1. The Man Christ Jesus is Son and Servant and Elect of God (Ps. ii. 7; Isa. xlii. 1),—Son, the Brightness of glory, the express Image, and in every perfection the Equal of the Father, by whom He is begotten; Servant, righteous Servant, who, doing the work which pleased the Father, glorified Him on earth, finishing it by bowing His head and giving up the Ghost; Elect of God, and precious Chosen of Him from eternity, and foreordained to obedience and suffering before the corner-stones of creation were fastened. 2. The Man Christ Jesus is the Seed of the woman, and the Seed of Abraham, the Root and Offspring of David, and the Son of Mary (Gen. iii. 15, xxii. 18; Rev. xxii. 16; Luke i. 32; Acts ii. 30). These titles, which break forth along the line of His ancestry according to the flesh, are proofs that He is the Saviour promised to the world and invitations to believe and praise the love of God, who in "the fulness of time sent forth His Son," etc. 3. The Man Christ Jesus is the Mediator, the Surety, and the Messenger of the covenant. In the covenant, of which Christ Jesus is mediator, there is an old and a new testament. The efficacy of His mediation, running along the Old Testament, breaks forth with greater lustre and vigour under the New; and "by means of His death for the redemption of the transgressions under the first testament, they who are called" under both, whether Israelites or Gentiles, "receive the promise of eternal inheritance." The Mediator of the covenant is the Surety of it. The vigour of His suretyship, together with its precious effects, extends itself to both testaments of the covenant; but under the new its beauty is more conspicuous and its effects more extensive. The Mediator and Surety is the Messenger of the covenant. The glad tidings of a new and everlasting covenant He published to the world in paradise, proclaimed by His holy prophets, sealed and ratified with His own blood upon the Cross, and by the mouth of His apostles, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, made them known to all nations for the obedience of faith. 4. The Man Christ Jesus is the Priest, the Prophet, and the King whom God hath raised up and anointed. Salvation, effected by His death as a priest and revealed in His Word as a prophet, is completed under His administration as a king. While on earth He executed the offices in His humiliation; and after rising and ascending into heaven, He executes them in His exaltation. Their glory is not an occasional and transient blaze, but a sunshine, which shall continue for ever, and fill the heaven of heavens with brightness of glory through eternity.

**III. The crucifying.**—Christ Jesus is the Man by Himself. Among the sons of the mighty none is equal to Him, none is like Him, and there is none besides Him. The crucifying is a deed of which, in all its circumstances, there is no example in the history of punishment. 1. The crucifying of the Man Christ Jesus is exhibited to the world as a deed which executed the counsel of God (Acts ii. 23). 2. The crucifying of the Man Christ Jesus is exhibited to the world as a deed that fulfilled many prophecies of Scripture (Gen. iii. 15; Ps. xxii. 16; Isa. liii.; Zech. xii. 10; Dan. ix. 26). 3. The crucifying of the Man Christ Jesus is exhibited to the world as the infliction of a penalty. The crucifiers beheld it as the punishment which their laws inflicted upon

blasphemers of God and the king; but "He had done violence to none, neither was any deceit in His mouth. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, to put Him to the grief" of dying on the Cross, and to "make His soul an offering for sin." In the judgment of God, which is according to truth, the crucifying of the Lord of Glory, in our nature and stead, is the punishment that transgressors of the law under which He was made deserved. 4. The crucifying of the Man Christ Jesus is exhibited to the world as the operation of a curse. The curse is the sentence which the Lawgiver denounced upon the transgressor of His law. 5. The crucifying of the Man Christ Jesus is exhibited to the world as the expedient of reconciliation for iniquity. In this expedient the wisdom and love of God break forth to the world, and meeting together with His holiness, mercy, truth, and righteousness, glorify themselves in the highest.

**IV. Wonders in the Crucifixion.**—Here God and man, sin and holiness, love and hatred, weakness and strength, honour and dishonour, death and victory, the blessing and the curse, meet together, and exert themselves wondrously, forming coalitions of conflicting causes, and producing effects apparently discordant, yet perfectly harmonious.—*A. Shanks.*

*The call of the Cross.*—The Cross is the symbol of the eternal love of God, and it is the symbol of the perfect life of man. The call of the Cross is like the call of other facts of nature and of the universe. It is like the call of the sunshine and the rain, and no more mysterious. The sunshine and the rain call the farmer to sow the seed to co-operate with nature, to link his little life with the great life of God. The one is no more mysterious than the other. The farmer labours in a narrow sphere; the Christian labours in all the spheres. The Cross shews to us the true life of man—the Christ-life.

**I. The Cross calls all men to personal holiness.**—The end of salvation is that men may have the very life of God. There are two elements in this idea of holiness. The sacrifices when they were brought to be offered, if they were acceptable sacrifices, must be of animals in perfect health, perfect physical health and purity. And so the primary idea of holiness is that of healthfulness or of purity. We speak of the sacrifice of Christ, the stainless purity of Christ: to be fit to be offered to God as He was—to that all men are called. But then there is another idea in connexion with these sacrifices. The first idea was the idea of health and purity; the second idea is of something which is set apart to the service of God. Now we are to understand that goodness does not imply weakness. Goodness implies the finest strength and the finest beauty and the most finished culture, all set apart to God. There has been an idea in other ages that what we call the heroic virtues—bravery, courage—that these were the things which require strength. But love requires more strength than all the heroic virtues combined. It was a braver thing for Ignatius Loyola, when that rabble of Chinese turned upon him and a rude ruffian rushed up and spat in his face, quietly to look down and smile upon him and commend him to the love of God, than for Marshal Ney at Waterloo to lead the Old Guard. The one had all the enthusiasm and passion of a great occasion; the other saw ten thousand men against him and only God above. A man once said: "If I were an artist, I should like to paint my ideal of God; I should paint Him, not as some have painted Him, as a feeble old man with snowy hair; I should paint Him, not as others have painted Him, seated upon a lofty throne, with thousands bowing before Him; I should paint my ideal of God as a great cloud, and out of the cloud an outstretched hand, and in our weakness and guilt, in our consciousness of our utter impotence to be that to which we are called, I would see that hand reaching from beyond the stars."

**II. The Cross calls all to fill their lives with service and sacrifice for humanity.** Christ's ideal is to become our life. Not only are we to become like Him, not only are we to think His thoughts, but we are to do as He did. I sometimes wonder how it is that people have so mistaken emphasis, and have spent so much time in seeking to adjust the death of Christ to a philosophical system, when all the while there is the example of One who went about doing good, who bound up the broken-hearted, who was seeking opportunities to be helpful to those who are in suffering. It is only one thing that can make a cross, and that is love; and love must go into that shape, because love means sacrifice. Love always hangs on the cross. The more we love, the more we must suffer. The more our hearts are tied to our dear ones, the more awfully will they be broken if those dear ones do not realise the life to which they are called.

**III. We are called by that Cross of Christ to believe in the triumph of the truth and righteousness.** That shows us, as nothing else does, what has been spent—that poverty, that sorrow, that sin, can be destroyed. And in our hours of darkness, when we feel as if everything were going awry, when it seems to us as if there were no God at the heart of things, when we look up into the great wide sky inquiring wherefore we were born, for earnest or for jest—in those moments, when it seems as if nothing but a heartless and cruel fate were at the heart of things, the voice from the cross, serene as the music of the angel-choirs, rings out its inquiry, “Can you believe that a work which was baptised with the blood of the Son of God, and which Jesus died to start, can ever be defeated?”—*A. H. Bradford, D.D.*

Ver. 26. *The title on the Cross.*—That white board has long since perished—it has crumbled to dust; and yet there is a glorious sense in which the inscription can never be obliterated. Fire cannot burn it out; waters cannot wash it away; spears cannot erase the wondrous words; and to-day, in living letters of glorious light, it stands out for us and for every living creature to read that Jesus—this Jesus of Nazareth—is King—King of the Jews and King of the world.

**I. What this inscription meant to Pilate.**—It was Pilate's revenge on the priests; it was a studied insult to them. It was one of those sarcastic sallies in which the Romans delighted. Pilate must have fallen very low to make scoff and sport at such a time. There is no knowing where a man may be led when he once gives way to revenge. Nothing is sacred then; he will trample underfoot the most solemn thing; he will disregard the most solemn moment. For ever the character of Pilate stands out as the character of a man who knew the right, but did it not—who was convinced of the true path, but deliberately turned round and walked in the false.

**II. What the priests could have seen in that inscription.**—To them it was one of the most startling and searching sentences upon which their eyes had ever looked, and we can see from the wondrous story how vexed, how bitter, they were when they found out the trick that Pilate had played upon them. Why, there was the very thing they least loved—that proclamation of the Kingship of this Man dying on the Cross. They could not reconcile His lowly origin and His ignominious death with His Divine claims and glorious title. And that is the difficulty with many even now. The real distinctive character of Christianity is that it is independent of all outward and material conditions of greatness.

**III. What could have been the special relation to Jesus, as He hung upon the Cross, of that inscription above His head?**—It was written in jest—but there was a tremendous meaning in those words! There, above the Cross, is inscribed His sweetest name. Jesus! Mystic, blessed, soul-healing name! Jehovah! Emmanuel! Shepherd! Unspeakable Gift! Saviour! Name of sweetness! Name of power! Name for the guilty! Name for the lost! Name for all



nations! Note also that on the Cross is a mark of the wondrous condescension of Jesus, for there is "Nazareth," "Jesus of Nazareth," despised Nazareth. Ay, and there I see also His rightful dignity, "King." But where is His throne, and where His sceptre and His crown? Ah! don't you see them? That wooden Cross is His throne; the nails in His hands are His sceptre; those twisted thorns form His crown. "He conquered when He fell"; He reigned when He died; and never king was more kingly than Jesus on the Cross. But I see also a hint of His future glory. "King of the Jews." He is coming again; and "when He cometh to make up His jewels," as the children sing, among the brightest of His crown shall be some of the children of Abraham, "bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh"; and though now they are cast out and scattered, though they are a nation and yet no nation, though indeed they have no human king and no human governor, when He comes, He who scattered Israel shall gather them, and reign over the people who once pierced Him.

IV. What is it to us?—What is it to me? Some one has said that that inscription on the Cross was the first printed sermon. It was printed in three languages—in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Hebrew was the language of religion, Greek the language of culture, Latin the language of power. Was it not prophetic? Has it not its messages for to-day? Yes. What is the message of the Cross for men of culture? It is this: that Jesus must be their King, Jesus must be owned as Master of the mind and Lord of every gift and talent. Oh that to-day intellect, genius, science, art, literature, and all culture might own the kingship of Christ! And what shall we say of the Latin—the emblem of power and empire? Christ must be King—King over men of influence, men of power, statesmen, rulers, magistrates, judges. King in the senate-house, King on the bench, King in our courts of law, King in all our local assemblies. Dare we forget it? Woe be to our dear land if we do! And what of religion? Oh, if He is not King here, religion will be the dearest, dullest, dreariest, most abominable thing of all! Oh that we who profess to be men and women religious in heart and life may truly own the kingship of Christ! Now I want us all to recognise in these three languages emblems of the three parts of our own lives; and I want us to say to Jesus Christ, "Oh, Christ of the Cross, Saviour of men! come and rule in my life, not in one part of it, but in all parts of it—come and make me all Thine own."—*W. J. Mayers.*

*Jesus our King.*—"Behold your king!" exclaimed Pilate to the Jews, as they crowded round his tribunal to witness the condemnation of Jesus. The words may have been spoken in sarcasm; but we would hope they were rather intended as a last appeal to the compassion of the populace. Some have even thought that they embodied the secret impression of Pilate's own mind. Certain it is that he was alarmed by the peculiarity of Christ's appearance and manner; and possibly enough he entertained a fear lest He should have a real claim to the title thus assigned Him. But, with whatever motive He uttered the words—whether in derision or in seriousness, in contempt or in faith—his tongue was the instrument of Providence in declaring a great and stupendous truth; and that truth he afterwards recorded, in "the three great languages of the ancient world—the languages of culture, of empire, and of religion"—upon the Cross of Christ.

I. The kingly relation in which Jesus stands to us is far more definite and intelligible than it was to the Jews.—1. Though He was indeed their king by the strongest claims—announced to them as such by prophecy, expected by them in that character for ages, and manifested to them by demonstrations of miraculous power—yet it must be confessed that there was much difficulty and much obscurity hovering about His pretensions, when He stood before the

tribunal of Pilate or hung upon the tree of Calvary. It must have been a hard matter even for the eye of faith to discover in that apparently helpless and destitute Object any appearance of regal dignity. He seemed abandoned alike by heaven and earth—One whose condition was that of utter hopelessness, whose ruin was inevitable, and who was only rescued from absolute contempt by the placid dignity of His manner. Accordingly we find that even those who had seen His arm uplifted in the majesty of omnipotence, and heard His voice when it hushed the tumult of the waves or called the dead back to earth, made shipwreck of their faith in this hour of trial. Although therefore a keen observer of mankind might, as Pilate did, perceive in the conduct of Jesus symptoms of an extraordinary and wondrous character, how were the multitude to discriminate or to recognise a King in One condemned to crucifixion as a criminal? But *we* are under no such difficulty. To us Jesus appears not as a culprit, but as the Conqueror of death and the Lord of life. Why, then, should we hesitate to acknowledge Him as our King? 2. The Jews were differently situated from us with respect to Christ, as they had received no positive, public, and official assurance from Him of His being their king. It did not enter into His design to announce Himself formally to them in that capacity. He was, in fact, their spiritual, not temporal sovereign; but as long as He was present amongst them in person He could never have made them comprehend the distinction. He therefore left it to His apostles to explain fully the nature of His kingdom, its extent, and the qualifications requisite for membership in it. Now the explanation which the apostles gave in consequence of that commission we are in full possession of. We find in the New Testament an account of a spiritual kingdom, whose Invisible Head is Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. 3. The Jews had received no such benefits as they expected from Christ as their King. He had, it is true, proved a great and signal benefactor to them in many respects; but the blessings of His kingdom were not dispensed so long as He remained on earth in the flesh. The Holy Spirit, who was to be the agent in dispensing the blessings and extending the bounds of that kingdom, did not openly commence His work till Christ's bodily presence was withdrawn. We, on the other hand, have from infancy shared all the present privileges and advantages of Christ's kingdom, and have been cheered with the hope of those which are hereafter to be revealed. We therefore are utterly without excuse if we do not acknowledge and reverence Him as our King. In His hands the Father has been pleased to place the absolute control of all our destinies. He is our Ruler, our Protector, our Example, and our Judge.

**II. The feelings with which we should regard Jesus as our King.**—1. With reverence. The very thought of Him should stifle every lofty imagination and hush every unguarded word. We bend ourselves, with a feeling of awe, before an earthly monarch: should we not, then, present ourselves in a constant attitude of humility before the Supreme Sovereign of creation? Let this thought operate upon the minds of those who are in the habit of speaking lightly of the gospel, and using the name of Christ more familiarly than they would that of a common acquaintance. This practice, though originating often in thoughtlessness, is an offence of a very serious cast, which blunts the delicate edge of spiritual susceptibility. 2. With love. An earthly sovereign, by a few acts of munificence, or even by a few generous expressions, finds an easy passage to the hearts of his people. But has Christ conferred no more than one or two benefits upon us? Has He uttered only a few expressions of kindness? Surely, if ever sovereign deserved the love of His subjects, it must be He who, after having said and done everything that could encourage and console, laid down His life for them! What an inversion is it, not merely of right reasoning, but of proper and honourable feeling, when we loudly extol those whose ambition has

led thousands to death, as sheep to the slaughter, but dare to depreciate that Divine Mercy which could offer up itself a sacrifice for the ungodly!

III. Where especially shall we offer our homage to Christ as King?—He is not to be seen, as formerly, walking amongst men, in the humble state of a companion, or the still more lowly form of a servant. Nor is He at present to be seen by us in the magnificence of celestial splendour. The time indeed will come when the eye that now looks to Him in faith shall actually behold Him in all the brightness of His glory. But the mists of earth cannot yet be penetrated, and we must be satisfied with a distant and mental contemplation of our King. Yet is He not far from any one of us; and occasions there are when we may know that He is specially among us, to receive our worship and our praise. 1. He marks the looks, the gestures, nay, the inmost thoughts, of those who present themselves in the courts of His house. And there also those who are thus seen by Him may with the eye spiritual behold Him in return—may see Him smiling benignly, may hear Him whispering peace, and may feel Him in their souls blessing their efforts and strengthening their resolutions. 2. We may behold and worship Him in the retirement of private devotion. When, bowed down under the sense of sin, or in affliction or sickness, we raise our hearts to heaven, we may see Him bending from His throne of love to hear our prayer and recommend it by His advocacy to His Father. 3. But surely our homage is more particularly due to Him when we kneel before Him at that altar which He Himself consecrated as the peculiar scene of His intercourse with His people. There He meets us by special appointment. There He pours forth in fullest measure the riches of His grace. There, then, let us not fail to present ourselves continually before Him, and offer Him our most heartfelt praise and thanksgiving, and plead before the Eternal Father the Great Sacrifice of Calvary.

Ver. 34. *Our Lord's desertion by the Father.*—This complaint is borrowed from the twenty-second Psalm, which begins with these words. And if it be asked why our Saviour chose to express Himself on this occasion in the language of David, two probable reasons may be given for this. 1. That the Jews might call to mind the great resemblance between His case and that of this illustrious king and prophet. In both cases innocence and virtue were borne down by violence and eclipsed under a cloud of sufferings, while the wicked triumphed and the vilest of men were exalted. 2. The other reason of Christ's taking the words of this psalm might be that this psalm was allowed to belong to the Messiah, and to have its ultimate completion in Him. To signify that He was the person foretold in this psalm our dying Lord makes the complaint His own, and this after His crucifiers had as it were challenged Him to make good His titles to this character.

I. Consider the style which our dying Lord uses in addressing Himself to God.—“My God, My God.” 1. These words can signify no less than a consciousness of His integrity at the time of our Saviour's using them. At that very time His heart was so far from reproaching Him as to applaud every action of His life and fill Him with great peace and assurance. 2. Christ might well say, “My God, My God,” because He had chosen and avouched Him for such, and loved and delighted in Him with a flame of devotion which angels themselves cannot equal. 3. These words imply the filial confidence and trust which Christ reposed in His Father at the very time that He complained so tenderly of His having forsaken Him.

II. In what sense was Christ forsaken by God in His passion?—1. Are we to believe that God was angry with His well-beloved Son? Was His heart turned against Him, and His love towards Him for some time interrupted?



Did the wrath of God fall upon this sacrifice like fire from heaven, and as it were consume it, as He saith of His own zeal? These things I call impossible. For how in the nature of things could they possibly be? How could the same Person at the same time be both innocent and guilty, the object of the love of God and of His wrath? Or how could the righteous Judge of the world, who is infinite in knowledge, reckon things and persons to be what they really were not? 2. But if God was not angry with His Son, might not the Son apprehend that He was, or at least doubt of the continuance of His Father's love to Him, the fear of which filled Him with this amazing anguish? No. The Scripture saith it is impossible for God to lie. But what had such a delusion as this been better?—to make His Son believe things for which there was no manner of foundation? And as for His being in such an error if left to Himself, it is also impossible. His conscience could not accuse Him of what He never committed; and He had too worthy and honourable thoughts of the Deity to apprehend His displeasure, while His own heart did not condemn Him. 3. The true meaning of this complaint. (1) "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" *i.e.* "Why dost Thou leave Me destitute of Thy heavenly aid in this dreadful conflict? In My agony when I prayed so fervently that the cup might pass from Me, there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening Me; but now Thou neither helpest Me immediately nor by Thy holy angels: I am left to wrestle single against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." And was He not a match for them in His own strength?—able alone to stand against their whole force, and to support the load of sufferings which was laid upon Him, without the assistance of ministering angels? Doubtless He was, and for that reason was left to Himself upon the Cross. (2) "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" *i.e.* "Why hast Thou taken from Me the joys and consolations of Thy presence. If I had these, as I have formerly enjoyed them, no sorrows and pains that I could feel would make any great impression upon Me. But, oh! the scene is changed, and that darkness which now covers the earth is but an emblem of that thicker night which has involved My soul!" (3) "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" *i.e.* "Why am I left so long in this suffering condition, exposed to the insults of wicked men and the rage of infernal spirits, a spectacle of shame and horror to the world? Why dost Thou delay so long to take My soul? Oh, come, My Father, and at length release My wearied spirit!" (4) How is the condition of our Redeemer changed since the time He made this bitter complaint! As the sun, after its eclipse, broke out with double lustre upon the world, so did the light of His Father's countenance upon His soul; shame and sorrow and suffering were succeeded by glory, rest, and felicity—and victory with triumph.

**III. Inquire into the reasons of God's thus forsaking His beloved Son.**—As the Scripture does not give us any particular reasons of this, distinct from those of His sufferings in general, we have no other rule to go by but the end or design of His sufferings, which relates either to His example, or His sacrifice, or His priesthood, or His victory over the enemies of His Church. 1. If the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to forsake His well-beloved Son in His dying passion, it was in order to add the greater perfection to His example (1 Pet. ii. 2; Heb. v. 7-9). To carry His example to the greatest height, He not only suffered from men, but from God—pain and shame and death from men, desertion from God: in all teaching us how to behave with humble, filial resignation to the One, and charity and meekness to the other. 2. Another design of the Father in this temporary desertion of His dying Son might be to increase the perfection of His atonement (1 Pet. ii. 24; Heb. ix. 26, x. 14; Eph. i. 7). He not only sheds His blood, in which the life of the body consists, but He sheds it with all the circumstances necessary to complete the

expiation: His soul had its share of suffering; and though, being pure and innocent, He could know nothing of the gnawings of a guilty conscience, that worm which never dies, nor suffer under the wrath and displeasure of a Holy God, who, loving righteousness, could not for a moment hate that Person who of all beings represented Him most exactly in this respect, yet He bore all that an innocent being could well be liable to, and for so long a time as the Divine Wisdom judged meet. 3. This circumstance of our Saviour's sufferings, His being forsaken of God, contributes to the perfection of His priesthood. He suffered by inward sorrow and desertion, as by outward and bodily pain, and is therefore able to succour them that are in the same condition, so as to be also willing and inclined to do it. 4. This completes His victory over the grand adversary of God and man, and renders His triumph the more glorious. Satan shall see that he has another kind of person to deal with than he had in the first Adam—One who, left to Himself, is not only able to cope with him, but easily to baffle all his temptations and stratagems, and with an invincible courage to repel all his assaults.

**Concluding reflexions.**—1. How should this endear the Redeemer of the world to us, who was willing to suffer such things for our sakes—shame and pain and death; to be persecuted by men, assaulted by Satan, and forsaken of God! 2. This part of the history of our Saviour's last passion carries in it a great deal of instruction and consolation to His faithful disciples when they are in like circumstances with Him.—*H. Grove.*

Ver. 38 *The rent veil.*—This seems a trifling incident to record in such a solemn place. That an ancient curtain, worn out in the lapse of years, should be torn—what is there in that to excite surprise or be thought worthy of notice, especially at such a time?

**I. The whole worship and ritual of the Jews was like a volume of pictures, by which they were taught spiritual truths.**—1. The veil told them that there was a barrier between them and God—sin. They felt as they gazed upon it somewhat of the same awe that falls upon us as we stand outside the chamber of death, and know that a few feet away there is a visitor stronger than any human power, unseen, but terribly real. 2. There is nothing to hinder us from coming face to face with God in worship—no outward symbol that sets a barrier to us, past which we dare not go. But though the veil has been taken away, that still remains of which the veil was but the picture. Our sin hangs as a thick curtain between us and the purity of God. 3. Have we ever felt that this veil is there, over our hearts—no delusion, but an awful fact? It is indeed the most fundamental of all truths—that which we must start with. Here a beginning is made with us by God. He speaks to sinners, and to sinners alone. We cannot feel the full joy of salvation if we have not first felt the sorrow, the desolation, of the separation that sin has made between us and God. 4. The depths and the heights of Christian experience lie close together. There is no better place to seek God, no surer place to find Him, than in some valley of humiliation. The veil of the temple—let us take our stand before it, along with the great company of those who in all ages have mourned over their sin.

**II. The death of Christ can take the barrier of sin away.**—1. It is broken; the veil is rent; there is a way for us to God, a living way, for whomsoever will tread it. This is the gospel of Christ. It is a gospel that wounds before it heals, humbles before it exalts, strikes us down with a conviction of sin before it lifts us up with the assurance of forgiveness. 2. It is glad tidings to know that Christ has opened this way. But what good will it do to know it if we do not tread it? It will not do for us just to say, "Yes, Christ is the Saviour

of sinners." We must each one by one take a journey to the Cross alone, and meet Christ there. In the darkness we stretch out the feeble hands of faith, and pray that the veil may be withdrawn, the shadow lifted from off our souls. And lo! even as we pray our scarlet sins become white as snow, the veil is rent, and we are at peace with God.

III. *The rent veil signifies also that death is conquered.*—To the Jews death was at the best a sore discouragement, an unsolved problem. God was on the other side of the veil—they knew that; but whether He dwelt there alone or in company with the living saints of bygone days they could not be quite sure. So the whole of life was to them but a walking in the valley of the shadow of death, at the farther end of which sat that giant form—dim, dark, repulsive—filling up the whole space, and projecting his gloomy shadow along the whole path they travelled. But Christ has changed all this. He has rent for us the veil that is over our eyes, has brought to light the life and immortality that is beyond death, and has shewn to us on the other side not an empty heaven where God sits alone, but a heaven peopled with all who have loved and served Him here.—*R. T. Cunningham.*

Ver. 39. *The confession of the centurion.*—Many of us no doubt have witnessed a death—the death, probably, of some one near and dear to us. It was one of those events, necessarily rare in life, that in a few moments impress a stamp upon us which a lifetime cannot efface. We are not dead metal, but living souls. Such moments are full of awe,—not merely because of this more immediate contact with things unseen, but because of the increased responsibility; for we have one more great crisis to answer for, one more opportunity of making a fresh start on the flood-tide of feeling, which a crisis of this kind almost necessarily involves. And yet, after all, how small the event was which effected all this! The death of just one out of the myriads of the human race. How few there were that even for a short time missed him! How very narrow was the circle of affairs that was in any degree affected by his loss! But in spite of the evident want of change in the world around us, we cannot for a moment doubt the reality of the change which has come over ourselves.

I. *Once, and once only, in the history of the world all surrounding circumstances did change, in order to be more in harmony with a scene of death.*—Once, and once only, nature has swerved from its iron course for the sake of a dying man, and shewn clear signs of distress and suffering, in order to be in sympathy with a soul in agony. And well might it do so; for the agonised soul was the soul of its Maker and its Master. When the human soul of Christ took its willing flight to the hands of its Heavenly Father, the sun hid its face, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent"—the very graves set free their dead. It was sights and sounds such as these which told upon the centurion and his companions, and wrung from them that marvellous confession, "Truly this was the Son of God."

II. *In all that multitude they were the very group from whom one might least have expected it.* Such an exclamation would have come naturally from the lips of the disciples. It would not have surprised us had it been uttered by the crowd—a mob which had been raised to such enthusiasm for Him on Palm Sunday by the report of the raising of Lazarus, and to such frenzy against Him by the machinations of the priests, might easily have been won back (we think) by portents like these. Nay, it would not wholly have astounded us if it had proceeded from the priests themselves. The darkness, and the earthquake, and the rending of the veil might have forced home the truth even on them. But no; the priests are already preparing to take further measures against "that deceiver." The most that any of the people do is to smite their breasts



and return. And as for the disciples, the very things that should have turned their hopes into certainties robbed them of hope altogether. On Easter morning the news of His resurrection seemed to them as "idle tales." No; the only persons able to interpret these awful signs aright are despised Gentiles; and among these not people of thought and culture, but Roman soldiers. Nor was it the execution which touched them. The cruel punishments of Rome had made them familiar enough with scourging and crucifixion. But they had had other experiences to-day. They may have been part of the band who found themselves prostrate on the ground at the mere word of their Prisoner. They may have heard, one of them may have carried, the message from Pilate's wife. They had heard the cry of the Jews, which made Pilate "the more afraid," and of which their own exclamation seems to be an echo: "By our law He ought to die, because He made Himself Son of God." And no doubt they had been on duty during the three hours of darkness, at the close of which came the earthquake. They had heard also the last great cry with which that Life which redeemed the world was yielded up. And St. Mark tells us that it was this cry, even more than the surrounding wonders, that called forth the confession of the centurion.

III. **And why?**—Possibly because such proof of unsubdued power, after the long hours of agony and exhaustion, seemed nothing short of miraculous. But still more perhaps because His dying immediately after such proof of power shewed that, after all that the malice of His enemies had inflicted on Him, His death was voluntary. He surrendered His life. There is yet one more fact which may well have contributed to produce this startling conviction in the mind of the centurion and his companions: the dying words of Christ. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." They had heard that He claimed to be "Son of God"—a title quite unknown to them among their own divinities and heroes. What did it mean? "Son of Jupiter," "Son of Venus," "Offspring of the gods," they could have understood. But "Son of God"? Death stared Him in the face; and to speak falsely in the hour of death is scarcely human; and yet with His dying words He had commended His spirit into the hands of that Almighty Father whose Son from His childhood upwards He had claimed to be. It was this then that drove the truth home to the Roman soldiers. "Certainly," they said, "this was a righteous man." Certainly this man was no deceiver. "Truly this was the Son of God."

IV. **The assent of more than eighteen centuries has ratified their verdict.**—And it will hold good till He Himself makes good the promise made to Caiaphas: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

**Lessons.**—1. Christ's willing surrender of His life may teach us that in the spiritual world there is only one road to success—the surrender of self. He who "hallowed birth by being born," and "conquered death by dying," conquered the stubborn wills of men by surrendering His own. And there is no other way for us. This is not a lesson to be buried in a napkin until some great affliction calls it into use. It is a lesson for every day and every hour. There is no annoyance too trifling for the exercise of it. If in the petty vexations of which we have a dozen a day we learn to submit with cheerfulness for the sake of Christ's Cross, we shall be ready even to give thanks to Him for His chastisement, when He sees fit to bruise us more severely. Thus all our lives long we may share the mind of our dying Master. To us to live will be Christ, and to die gain. 2. And this easily leads us to the second point—our Lord's commendation of His spirit into the hands of His Father. If we have in any way learnt to surrender our wills to God, we shall not find it hard to commend our whole being to Him. The right to do so has been won for us by Christ.

That which would be an abomination to Him, "who charges even the angels with folly," becomes a sweet-smelling sacrifice when united with the Sinless Victim of the Cross. Christ's offering was a double one—His own Divinity and our humanity. Ours must be double also—ourselves with Christ, Christ with ourselves. And this also is a work not for a few great and rare occasions, but for our whole life. In all that we do we must ever be commending ourselves, in union with Christ, to God. Yet there are times when it may be done with more than usual solemnity and devotion; and among these surely is our Easter Communion. Let Easter morning, or at least some day in Easter week, find us on our knees before God's altar, saying with all the humble confidence a sinful soul can cherish, and all the loving self-sacrifice a grovelling heart can feel, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my life. Do with me as seemeth best unto Thee in time and in eternity." And as we retire with the seal of Christ's body and blood within us, assuring us that the fire of the Lord has fallen upon our offering, we shall know, not by the darkness and the earthquake, but by the light and peace of His presence, that "truly this is the Son of God."—*A. Plummer, D.D.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 21. *Simon the Cyrenian.*—Simon was a Jew by descent, probably born, certainly resident, for purposes of commerce, in Cyrene, on the North African coast of the Mediterranean. No doubt he had come up to Jerusalem for the Passover; and, like many strangers, met some difficulty in finding accommodation in the city, and so was obliged to lodge in one of the outlying villages. From this lodging he is coming in, in the morning, knowing nothing about Christ or His trial, and happens to see the procession as it is passing out of the gate. He is compelled by the centurion, for what reason we do not know, to carry the heavy Cross of the Saviour,—reluctantly no doubt, but gradually touched into some kind of sympathy; drawn closer and closer, as we suppose, as he looked upon this dying meekness; and at last yielding to the soul-conquering power of Christ.

**I. The greatness of trifles.**—Our lives are like the Cornish rocking-stones, pivoted on little points. The most apparently insignificant things have got such a strange knack of suddenly developing unexpected consequences, and turning out to be not small things at all, but great and decisive and fruitful. And so let us look with ever fresh wonder on this marvellous texture of human life, and on Him

that moulds it all to His own perfect purposes. Let us bring the highest and largest principles to bear on the smallest events and circumstances, for you never can tell which of these is going to turn out a revolutionary and formative influence in your life. And then let us learn this lesson, too, of quiet confidence in Him in whose hands the whole puzzling, overwhelming mystery lies.

**II. The blessedness and honour of helping Christ.**—Christ's Cross has to be carried to-day; and if we have not found out that it has, let us ask ourselves if we are Christians at all. There will be hostility, alienation, a comparative coolness, and absence of a full sense of sympathy in many people with you, if you are a true Christian. There will be a share of contempt from the wise and the cultivated of this generation, as in all generations. The mud that is thrown after the Master will spatter your faces too, to some extent; and if we are walking with Him, we shall share to the extent of our communion with Him in the feelings with which many men regard Him. Stand to your colours! Do not be ashamed of the Master in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And there is another way in which this honour of helping the Lord is given

to us. As in His weakness He needed some one to aid Him to bear His Cross, so in His glory He needs our help to carry out the purposes for which the Cross was borne. The paradox of a man carrying the Cross of Him who carried the world's burden is repeated in another form too. He needs nothing, and yet He needs us.

### III. The perpetual recompense and record of humblest Christian work.—

"How little Simon knew that wherever in the whole world this gospel was preached, there also this that he had done should be told for a memorial of him!" Why, men have fretted their whole lives away to get what this man got, and knew nothing of one line in that chronicle of fame. And so we may say it shall be always, "I will never forget any of their works." We may not leave them on any records that men can read. What of that, if they are written in letters of light in that "Lamb's Book of Life," to be read out by Him before His Father and the holy angels in that last great day. We may not leave any separable traces of our service, any more than the little brook that comes down some gully on the hillside flows separate from its sisters, with whom it has coalesced in the bed of the great river or in the rolling, boundless ocean. What of that so long as the work, in its consequences, shall last!—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*The firstfruits of the heathen world.*—The Synoptists in the accounts which they give of the Crucifixion bring into prominent notice Simon of Cyrene as the man who was compelled to bear the Cross of Christ, and with this brief notice he disappears apparently from the pages of Scripture. I think, however, if we look a little more closely, we shall find that he reappears in Acts xiii. 1 as a member of the early Church under the name of Simeon, who was called Niger. My view of the matter was suggested by the following considerations: 1. Simon and Simeon are interchangeable names, as where in Acts xv. 14 Simon Peter is called Simeon. 2. Simon of Cyrene might

appropriately have been called Niger, in allusion to the colour of his skin, coming as he did from Africa. 3. Simeon, who was called Niger, is mentioned in Acts xiii. 1, in close juxtaposition with Lucius of Cyrene. I might further add, not as an argument, but as a fitting corollary to the circumstances, that we can scarcely think that Simon would not have been greatly impressed by the scenes which he witnessed, if indeed he did not receive some personal blessing from our Lord—he who in so real a sense had borne the Cross up the hill to Calvary, who had come into such close contact with Christ at such a critical moment, and who in all probability had been an eye-witness of the Crucifixion. So that we might almost expect to find him a member of the early Church, or at least would meet him there without surprise. If this identity be a real one, we see in Simon of Cyrene the very firstfruits of the heathen world.—*G. F. Assinder.*

*Providential leadings.*—What moved Simon to take that turning in the streets which brought him to Christ and His Cross, and just at the very moment he was needed? We cannot say. How curiously we are led! We take one turning in life rather than another, hardly knowing why, and the whole of our after-history is changed. It is not chance—it is God and ourselves. We often say that our lives are very dull and commonplace—there is nothing romantic or interesting about them—their story is not worth the telling. If we could only see them for a moment as God sees them, how different they would look! If we could only see the meaning and importance of the events which are taking place, of the things we do so thoughtlessly, the words we speak so carelessly, and understand the eternal interests involved in every hour that we live, we need not seek for romance outside the narrow circle in which we live.—*R. T. Cunningham.*

*Cross-bearing* is never pleasant, take it at its best; there is always a sting and a hardship in it which makes us



smart at the time: take it as for the most part we know it, and we shall find that we generally murmur and resist and complain, and try to shake it from our shoulders. But it must be done. It is through tribulation that our characters are perfected and heaven is won. So God does not ask our permission, or whether we are willing. He lays His Cross upon us, and compels us to carry it. Thank God He does!—*R. T. Cunningham.*

*Carrying Christ's Cross.*—Christ's Cross-bearing is not over yet; after nineteen hundred years He is still carrying it; and somehow I cannot but think of Him as continually tired and needing help. We can do something to relieve the sin and wretchedness beside which we live; and in relieving it we are making Christ's Cross easier for Him to bear.—*Ibid.*

*The Cross of Christ is the pivot of history.*—On this the doors of ancient life shut and modern history open. Heathen nations, however new or young, are ancient; Christian nations, however old, are modern. Western civilisation began on Calvary. Significant is the fact that the root of the word *stauros* (cross), descending from the Sanskrit, and meaning what "stands" or is "fixed," and thence reappearing in all the Indo-Germanic languages of Europe, is a figure of history's humblest yet mightiest landmark. On the head of that Cross were joined in one those three languages which represented religion, culture, and law, typifying the three world civilisations that were to become confluent and be vitalised by a Divine Person and character, and His ever-abiding Spirit. Asia furnished alike the Victim and him who delivered Him up; Europe the judge, tribunal, and executioners; but Africa bore the Cross. In this the century of hope for the Dark Continent, let it be remembered that one of her sons, in vicarious labour, carried that Cross on which the Redeemer of the African, as well as of the Asian and European, bore the sins of humanity.

Ver. 22. *Golgotha.*—The most approved explanation of this name is that it denotes a place slightly elevated and skull-shaped. The Latin designation, Calvary, which comes from the Vulgate, may or may not be meant to express the same meaning. That it was a place where the skulls of malefactors executed there were found is fanciful and improbable, because the Jews would not have suffered it, who were so careful to avoid everything Levitically unclean. Though Christ was suffering so much at this moment, and was about to suffer so much more intensely, He forgot Himself, and thought only of the distress of those who followed Him weeping and wailing, who soon, in the judgments that were hastening to fall on the guilty city, would themselves suffer such hitherto unknown calamities (Luke xxiii. 27-31).—*H. B. Hackett, D.D.*

Vers. 23-26. *The mystery of eternity.* Death by crucifixion was of all deaths the most shameful and most horrible—a pagan penalty that Judaism had never adopted, and one only inflicted by pagans on those of whom it was meant to make a horrible example. Wounding no vital part, and not robbing the victim of any blood, it was a death horribly lingering; while infinite varieties of anguish—from the crushed nerves, from the weight of the body, from the exposure to the scorching sun, from the fever set up by the wounds, and, in Christ's case, from the back ridged and furrowed, where each stroke of the lash had cut through the flesh—all conspired to make it a death of horror. Yet this is inflicted on Jesus, the Son of God, whose crime was mercy, whose mission here was one of redeeming love.

**I. All the mysteries of human nature are here.**—1. That of sin: depravity, as we have already noted, shewing itself clearly here, and demonstrating the corruption of mankind. 2. That of free-will is here. God restrains our sin by truth, mercy, grace, appeal, and warning, but not by force.

Man's freedom to wreck his immortal nature is shewn conspicuously here. 3. That of judgment is here suggested strongly. After these things must there not be some reckoning? (Luke xxiii. 31).

II. **The mysteries of Divine revelation are here.**—Not till a man has seen God in Christ on the Cross has he seen God. Here all marvels of God are displayed. 1. The mystery of God's love is here. Nature reveals God's wisdom; providence, His mercy and His judgment; but Calvary reveals His heart. It displays God's passion of mercy, His yearning to bless, His appreciation of man, His power of sacrifice. 2. The mystery of God's meekness is here. Daily He turns the left cheek to those who smote the right, and men mistake His patience for indifference to their faults. Here the meekness and lowliness of the Lord God Almighty are displayed. 3. The mystery of God's method of curing sin is here. By enduring its strokes He shames and vanquishes transgression.

III. **The mysteries of salvation are here.**—1. For here is atonement. The sin of man had never been adequately owned, prayed for, counterbalanced. But by accepting death—its penalty—Christ owns the death-worthiness of our sin. In His prayer, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do," He makes intercession for the whole guilty race. And there is enough love, faith, obedience, goodness, in Christ's dying to more than balance all the dishonour a world's transgression has done its God. This owning, praying for, repairing the wrong of a world's transgression is atonement. 2. Reconciliation is here (John x. 17; 1 John iv. 19). Our love meets God's love there, and we are reconciled. 3. The mystery of a great inspiration is here. Ever since, the Cross has been the pattern on the mount which holy lives have copied, and it has inspired love and sacrifice into countless hearts.

IV. **All mysteries of consolation are here.**—Had Christ evaded death, who would have dared to face it? But

when He has been with us in passing through the waters, He has changed Jordan's streams into still waters and its banks to green pastures. Death fixed its sting in Christ and left and lost it there. "He hath abolished death" (2 Tim. i. 10) by dying, and the consolations of peace and of immortal hope come from it. Thus Christ's Cross is our Alpha and Omega, glowing with law and gospel, comfort and constraint, power and peace; it is the new tree of life in the midst of life's wilderness. Let us refuse to glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—*R. Glover.*

Ver. 23. "*Wine mingled with myrrh.*"—Literally, "myrrhed wine," that is, drugged wine, to produce heartening it might be (see Bartholinus, *de vino myrrhato*, in his *De Cruce*, p. 136), or to induce comparative anæsthesia or insensibility. Myrrh is a strong stimulant. The administration of drugged wine to criminals about to suffer was a merciful custom, which relieved to a small degree the excessive ferocity so characteristic of the executions of those olden times (see Buxtorf's *Lexicon Talmudic*, p. 2131, and Wetstein *in loc.*). "But He received it not." Or, as the reading is in the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts, and "the queen of the cursives" (33), *who, however, received it not* (ὅς instead of ὃ). Our Lord did not wish to use any artificial means to mitigate or otherwise modify His sense of the sufferings connected with the culmination of His work. The value of these sufferings centred in the free activity that, first of all, chose their endurance, in consideration of the sublime moral ends to be subserved, and then self-sacrificingly held out, under their undiminished superincumbence, till all was finished.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Vers. 24-25. "*When they had crucified Him,*" i.e. when they had affixed Him to the Cross. A world of pain is hidden behind these simple words. Stripping the Sufferer of cloak and coat, the outer

and inner tunic, the soldiers would place Him on the Cross as it lay on the ground, and, stretching His arms across the cross-beam, drive the point of a large iron nail through one open palm after the other with blows from a mallet. They would then draw the legs down the upright, and drive another such nail through either foot, or perhaps through both together. Then, lifting the Cross into its socket, fresh pangs would thrill along all the fine and sensitive nerves thus lacerated, and the whole body would be racked with excruciating pains. All this He endured for us men and our salvation. And it seems probable that it was at this point that, instead of breaking into a scream of agony, He uttered the prayer for His murderers which Luke (xxiii. 34) records, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."—*S. Cox, D.D.*

Ver. 26. "*The King of the Jews.*"—Jesus is a King, and the King of the Jews; and neither the insult of Pilate, nor the anxious denial of the multitude, can affect the reality of that fact in the smallest degree. Though humbled, insulted, and crucified, Jesus was and is at once the King of Israel and the Head and Sovereign of every immortal man. To Him the Almighty has assigned the throne of His father David; and that throne, therefore, He needs must occupy. Nay, He has been exalted to kingly supremacy over the whole universe; and that kingly supremacy all must acknowledge, or perish.—*J. Cochrane.*

Vers. 27, 28. *Christ's companions in shame.*—Pilate may have to surrender Barabbas, the leader of the band, to the clamour of powerful hypocrites; he all the more readily will crucify two of his comrades. If he is to crucify Christ, he will label Him "King of the Jews," and give Him two thieves to keep Him company, in token of the sort of nation He would have to rule. The fact that such association dishonours Christ does not prevent him ordering it when it

may give him the sweets of a little revenge in shewing his contempt for everything Jewish. Yet even so there is something very instructive as the association of transgressors with Him in His death. 1. It is suggestive of the philosophy of the Atonement. The prophecy alluded to in ver. 28 was quoted by Jesus Himself (Luke xxii. 37), and gives the simplest theory of the Atonement which we can frame. Numbered with two conspicuous transgressors, the fact suggested that God had "numbered" Him with the whole race of transgressors, and permitted the common penalty of the world's sin to fall on Him. He is associated with us in our curse, that we may be associated with Him in heavenly bliss. 2. Where most need and misery are, there Christ always is. On His Cross He is near those dying on a cross. He is always nearest the neediest. 3. Be not oversolicitous of reputation. Christ is classed with thieves, Paul with deceivers. One of the most universal of afflictions for Christ's sake is being misunderstood. Marvel not if your name be "cast out as evil."—*R. Glover.*

Ver. 28. *Fulfilment of Scripture at the Crucifixion.*—Above every other aspect, the crucifixion of Christ was fulfilment. Let any one familiar with the language of prophet and psalmist pencil-mark every one of their words, verses, and versicles found in the Evangelists' story of Calvary. The result will be a well-underscored page, and the effect very striking to the eye. In the Greek text, like that of Westcott and Hort, where Old Testament language is printed in uncial or capital letter type, the effect is startling. From many angles of vision the seers of truth in the past ages caught glimpses of history's most august figure. Many are the photographic outlines set in the Old Testament pages of the Sinless Victim; but they are in profile or silhouette. Not one is perfect, none full-face or express image. Even they who wrote down their visions could not fully compre-



hend and interpret what they saw. Nevertheless, while inquiring and searching diligently of the salvation to come, they searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of the Messiah and the glory that should follow.

Vers. 29-32. *Mockers at the Cross.*—One does not know whether the blindness or the cruelty of these words is the more wonderful. There is nothing so cruel or so blind as religious hatred.

**I. Christ's Cross apparently shatters to fragments Christ's claims.**—Either Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead, and *then* He is the Son of God, and God hath exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour, as He claimed to be; or He died like other men, and there is an end of it. And then it is no use to talk about Him as a wise Teacher and a lovely perfect character, He is a fanatical Enthusiast, all the beauty of whose religious teaching is marred and spoiled by the extravagant personal claims which He attached to it. We must dismiss the fair dream of a perfect Man, unless we are prepared to go further and say, an Incarnate God.

**II. The Cross of Christ is a necessity, to which He voluntarily submitted in order to save a world.**—These men only needed to alter one letter to be grandly and gloriously right. If, instead of "could not," they had said "would not," they would have grasped the very heart of the power and the very central brightness of the glory of Christianity. It was His own will, and no outward necessity, that fastened Him there; and that will was kept steadfast and immovable by nothing else but His love—He Himself fixed the iron chain which bound Him. He made the "cannot." It was His love that made it impossible that He should relinquish the task; therefore His steely will, like a strong spring constantly work-

ing, kept Him close up against the sharp edge of the knife that cut into His very heart's life.

**III. The Cross is the throne of Christ.**—His dominion is a dominion based upon suffering, and wielded in gentleness and meekness; and the crown of thorns lies beneath the many diadems that He wears in heaven. The sceptre of reed, light, fragile, emblem of a meek and merciful dominion that lays a light and loving hand upon the inner springs of the will, and commands by serving, is a stronger rod of dominion than all golden jewel-tipped sceptres that monarchs bear.

**IV. The death of Christ is the great proof that God had delight in Him.**—Mystery of mysteries, where blend all opposites in harmonious reconciliation: Divine justice and Divine righteousness; the extremities of humiliation and the superlative of exaltation: life and death, the Divine forsaking and the Divine complacency.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 31. *Truth in mockery.*—Many true things have been said in jest. This is one. Never did a more important truth fall from the lips of a scoffer.

**I. A great tribute involuntarily accorded to Jesus.**—"He saved others." They practically condemn their own unbelief and their treatment of Him by making this admission. Even His bitterest enemies could find nothing worse to say about Him than this—that He had spent His life in acts of self-sacrificing love. And yet they have no compunction in hounding to death the One True Benefactor of mankind!

**II. A declaration true in one sense, false in another.**—"Himself He cannot save." 1. Not true in the sense they meant. (1) That God had disowned Him as an impostor. (2) That He was unable from want of power. 2. But most blessedly true in a sense far beyond their comprehension. (1) Christ's sufferings and death were part of a Divine plan. (2) They ful-

filled a pledge given (Gen. iii. 15).  
 (3) The object to be attained by them.  
 (a) God's honour. (b) Man's rescue.

Ver. 32. *Sight not conducive to faith.*—An earnest desire to see is but a very ill disposition in order to believe. Had Christ descended from the cross and not died, all faith had been quite destroyed, and He could not have been either the Author or Finisher of it. See here another delusion of human pride, to imagine that miracles are of themselves sufficient to engage men to believe—as if faith were not a gift of God. These men will believe, they say, if Christ save Himself from death—when they themselves had seen Him raise one who had been dead four days, without any other effect than increasing in envy, incredulity, and hardness of heart. So greatly does the sinner deceive himself.—*P. Quesnel.*

Ver. 33. *The veiled Cross.*—The darkening of the sun was the testimony of nature to her dying Lord. It is a hint of the truth that creation is dependent on Him, that nature is supported by unseen and spiritual powers, that the fate of the earth ultimately rests on that of the "kingdom of God."

I. *The suggestions of this darkness.*—1. It indicated the going out of the world's Light. 2. It represented the ignorance of the Gentiles and the malignity of the Jews. 3. It reminds us of the mystery of the Atonement. Christ went into the darkness to save us from darkness; and when the gloom passed away, and the sun shone upon the Cross, the restored light was like the bow of promise after the Flood, a sign of peace between man and God.

II. *The effects of the darkness upon those who surrounded the Cross.*—1. It increased the solemnity of the event. 2. It veiled His agony from those around. 3. It whispered warning to the impenitent.—*A. Rowland.*

*The supernatural darkness.*—It was not occasioned by an eclipse, for the full moon cannot intervene between the

earth and the sun. It was no doubt supernaturally contrived or overruled, as a fringe of the entire supernatural drapery of the great supernatural event which was transpiring within the Sufferer on the Cross. Not that any universal laws were contravened or suspended. But a new force came in, which limited the scope and modified the direction of the other forces that were ordinarily at work. Or when we go to the ultimates of thought, and to the corresponding ultimates of objective reality, we may represent the case thus—a peculiar volition took place in the Divine mind, which modified the action, in that particular scene, of the omnipotent Divine hand. It was meet that there should be around our Lord a penumbra of darkness. It at once reflected the mediatorial eclipse that was going on within, and cast a fitting shade over the guilty population in the immediate vicinity of the scene.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Ver. 34. *The causes of Christ's desolation.*—Though we cannot understand this sorrow of our dear Lord, because to us, perhaps, to be forsaken of God would mean so little—though we feel that we are in the presence of a mystery we cannot fathom, whose depths we cannot enter, at whose brink we can but stand and wonder and adore,—yet we may in reverence consider three causes which seem to have produced this element of the Sacred Passion. 1. The first cause of this awful desolation was the fact of the accumulated sin of the whole world, from the disobedience of Eden down to the last intention of sin that shall be disturbed by the archangel's trumpet, resting upon one Human Soul, to whom the faintest shadow of sin was intolerable. 2. The second cause was the gathering of the hosts of darkness, vanquished in the wilderness, and in the garden, and in many of the souls they had possessed, but now, rallied and marshalled and massed for one last supreme effort, hurling themselves with the fury of despair and hate upon their Vanquisher.

3. The third cause was the hiding of the Father's face. He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity could not look even upon His beloved Son, when deluged thus in our sin.

"He hides His face from sinners,  
He hideth it from Thee."

And what is all this but hell itself! To be deluged in sin, literally *sin-ful*, to be surrounded and attacked and tormented on all sides by devils, to be hidden from the light of God's countenance—what is all this but the foretaste of that misery of outer darkness, of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of everlasting destruction from the presence of God—the final awfulness of unrepented sin.—*H. S. Miles.*

*The forsaking of Christ by His Father.*

—All His other sufferings seem small by the side of this; they bore rather upon His body, this upon His soul; they came from the hands of men, but this from His Father. 1. This was a penal forsaking, inflicted on Christ for the satisfaction of our sins. 2. It was a real forsaking, not a fictitious one. The Father kept back at this time all the joys, comforts, and love from Christ the Man. 3. This forsaking took place in the very time of Christ's need. Yet His soul still cleaves to God for all this.—*Jas. Lonsdale.*

*Why God forsakes.*—For our sins, worldliness, carelessness, coldness, God justly forsakes us. Let us look diligently for the cause. Let us ask, "Is it in this thing or in that, that we have grieved Thy Holy Spirit? What duty have we neglected? What evil temper shewn? Do our thoughts wander in prayer? Are we formalists? Are we unthankful for Thy love?" So let us search our spirits that nothing escape us.—*Ibid.*

*The cry of desertion.*—Speaking of the words uttered by Christ in this terrible moment of loneliness, one says: "When I read what men have written to explain the meaning of Jesus in that cry, I always feel anew how much deeper than our comprehension went His identification with humanity when He plunged into the darkness of its sin.

'He was made flesh.' Into what mysterious contact with the sinfulness to which the flesh of man had given itself that 'being made flesh' brought Him I know no man has ever fathomed. If I try to fathom it at all, I can only picture to myself the most Christlike act, the most Messianic entrance into the strange and dreadful fate of other men which my imagination can conceive." The perfectly Holy One did bear sin, and out of the horrible abyss into which He had plunged came the agonising cry.

*The last temptation and triumph.*—

These words are a quotation from the twenty-second Psalm. Are they not more an appropriation of the whole psalm? The words directed the disciples to it as pointing out the current of His thoughts and expressing His condition. Thus they direct us, and in the psalm and its character we must look for the meaning and significance of His cry. Pitying them amid His agony, He cannot tell them all; but calling to mind the old familiar hymn, let them find His heart and its experience and triumph there. Read that psalm as such, and however darkly it opens, that only makes more glorious the psalmist's testimony. It is the history of a passionate soul passing through fierce discipline and suffering to confident security and triumph, feeling its way through weakness to strength, proving each step how faithful, how wonderful, is the abiding presence and keeping of God. The passionate cry of its opening verse is but the vivid sense of need, and emphasises the needlessness of all fear, the sureness of God's enclosing and faithful deliverance—the impossibility of being forsaken, for "God delivers even from the horns of the unicorn." Christ's utterance told truly His suffering and need, but pointed directly to the sureness of His triumph and glory. By the very words He chooses He would seem to be feeling after and touching His disciples' inner thought and weakness, forestalling as it were their despairful fears and conclusion when the tragedy shall be complete;



and by pointing in such words their uncomprehending thought, and carrying their minds to this psalm, He would comfort them in its assurances and give them its hope and security. Looked at in the light of the whole psalm, Christ is standing face to face with His sacrifice and work, facing its temptation and measuring Himself with it. The shadow which has crept nearer and nearer, vague but threatening, and deepening into awfulness, through His whole ministry, at length is known and felt, has become palpable and distinct, and holds Him; and He must know its meaning and measure. Isolating Him from human sympathy, it insinuates Him isolated from God also. The fear of the psalmist grows distinct and forceful before His broken and suffering spirit, challenging His faith; He takes it up, and through it moves into the confidence of the psalmist. "God doth not abhor the affliction of the afflicted." He hurls the insinuation, baffled and destroyed, from Him by His clear consciousness and confidence in the Father. He has measured His strength and resources, and can drink the cup He has accepted, and, drinking it, His work is finished.—*S. D. Thomas.*

Ver. 37. *The death of Christ reveals*—1. His perfect humanity. 2. A completed work of self-sacrifice. 3. The completeness of His rejection by the world. 4. The completion of the old dispensation. 5. A completed salvation. We instinctively expect consistency in a great and good man's death. We feel he ought to leave the trail of his greatness behind him. His dying influence should adorn what he leaves as witness to his worth. So Christ dies, sinking to rest as the setting sun in a stormful sky, making His life's close His triumph. You have seen the broken banks of storm-clouds massed in the heavy west of a winter's sky, with broken dun cloudlets floating through monotonous grey, changed into splendour by the sinking sun, flushed into rose and floating islets

of light and gold, and then the many tints deepening into the deep purple of evening's quiet. So Christ passed and sank to rest, so set the Sun of Righteousness, changing the storm, the tragedy, and Cross by heroism, wondrous words and prayers, into light and glory, deepening into serenity and rest. There was such a nobleness and greatness in the whole we cannot think of it as death; it was but a setting, His life's work crowned.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 38. *The veil rent.*—This veil formed the first mark of distinction which was observed in the use of the Temple with respect to the several gradations of those who worshipped therein. In these gradations consisted a feature of the Jewish Church which was not to be preserved in that which was to succeed it. In the new temple there was to be no family like Aaron's, no tribe like Levi's, no nation like the Israelites. The partition walls between outward and inner court, between the temple and its holy of holies, were all broken down; and the idolater who came in at the eleventh hour was as free of the new temple as the converted son of Abraham, whose fathers had served there from the first dawn and early morning of the Church. See Heb. ix. 1-8, x. 16-22.—*S. Hinds.*

Ver. 39. *Recognising nobleness.*—Next to being noble is the ability to recognise nobleness in others. In fact, this ability indicates a measure of nobleness in oneself; the recognition is a proof of kinship. It is in this as it is in every other line of observation and of outreaching: one's perceptions and attractions and repulsions are the truest test of one's personal character. The next thing to being manly is to recognise and honour manliness in another. The next thing to being unselfish is to recognise and honour unselfishness in another. The next thing to being pure is to recognise and honour purity in another. And

the next thing to being Christlike is to perceive the likeness of Christ; indeed, to perceive Christ's likeness is in itself to be Christlike.—*H. C. Trumbull.*

Vers. 40, 41. *Women at the Crucifixion.*—How true to the purpose of woman's creation as the helpmeet of man was the association of these faithful, clinging souls with their Lord in His passion! And He, in the perfection of His manhood, did not refuse the comfort of their presence. As He looked down upon that little group of loving faces in the midst of the pitiless crowd that was now surging round His Cross, we may reverently believe that the Son of Man found a little comfort in their true-hearted devotion, seeing in them the firstfruits of the faithful of all time, in whom He should see of the travail of His soul.—*H. S. Miles.*

*Woman's ministry to Christ.*—If such a thing is possible, the Saviour had done much more for woman than for man. Some who have rejected the gospel (Comte, for instance) have been the readiest to admit that it has raised the status of women immeasurably. Of the many elements in the gospel which have contributed to this, nothing has been more operative than the services which the Saviour has received from woman's hand. The gospel gave them a noble cause, to be advanced by methods of holiest peace; it engaged the love which made such service a delight, and gave

the grace which crowned it with supreme success. The ministry of women to the Rabbis was a recognised thing; and Jesus, in His homeless greatness and in His Divine poverty, could receive the gentle tendance of Galilean matrons without reproach. (1) It is a great cause which enlists the best feelings of the best women on its side. (2) Some might have objected to their going there, asking, "What good could possibly be done?" In dealing with such questions it is always safer to trust to the instincts of affection than to our reason. Their heart bade them stand beside Him, and, doing so, they gave a testimony greatly needed and of richest worth, and found themselves ready to help Joseph in his gracious task. (3) Mary Magdalene, "out of whom went seven demons" (Luke viii. 2), ought to be regarded as having been a great sufferer whom Christ relieved, not as a great sinner whom Christ forgave. We have in her action the full beauty of gratitude displayed. (4) Mary, wife of Cleophas (or Alpheus, for these are two forms of one name), is another instance of a good mother having good sons. When we see her heroic love, and that of Salome, who stands beside her, we do not marvel that each of them is the mother of two apostles. (5) What honour these women find, without having a single thought of working for it! So honour ever flies those who seek, but seeks those who merit it. See to thy work, and God will see to your reward.—*R. Glover.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 42—47.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxvii. 57-61; LUKE xxiii. 50-56.)

*Seasons of trial, times of preparation.*—The unrenewed mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Things seen and temporal have a tendency to carnalise the affections, and we are apt to forget whence we come, what we are doing, and whither we are going. He therefore who is preparing for a happy immortality gladly embraces seasons peculiarly devoted to the concerns of the soul. A pious divine has justly remarked that one part of the week is properly adapted for reflexion, and the other for preparation. A time of preparation, generally, is a season of trial, and is painful to flesh and blood.

Training is not enjoyment, but the means by which it is acquired. The way to heaven is through a wilderness and by a vale of tears. Times of refreshing revivals are ushered in by a night of preparation, often dark and portentous. What may be said of the state of the Church is also true of every individual: it is a time of preparation, because every individual is either preparing for happiness or misery.

I. **Times of preparation in the Church are seasons of trial.** Every individual who is acquainted with the history of the Church knows that it has undergone various changes. It is subject to incessant fluctuations, and either is progressing or retrograding. Such a state of things may be expected under the spiritual warfare in which the Church is engaged. If we fix our attention on that even of preparation referred to in the text and connect with it past events and those which immediately succeeded, we shall be fully convinced that a time of preparation is a season of trial. After the Babylonish captivity the Jews were little given to idolatry. The means of instruction were more widely diffused, and with this change of circumstances the carnality of their heart operated in new channels. Satan adapted his temptations to their moral state, and while externally they worshipped God the internal homage of the heart was withheld. Their religion was a form of godliness without its power. At this period the heathen nations lay prostrate at the feet of Satan; and the Jews, with few exceptions, yielded to his will. During this even of preparation Simeon had a few sons, and Anna some daughters, who observed the aspect of the times, and waited for the Consolation of Israel. The sceptre had departed from Judah, and every event seemed to hasten the grand consummation foretold by the prophets. An astonishing Personage appeared, in whom their hopes centred. With wisdom unequalled, benevolence unwearied, and power uncontrollable, He seemed to be the Desire of all nations. Hosannas ascend to His praise, and He is welcomed as the anticipated Deliverer of Israel. He announces that His kingdom is not of this world, and the crowd cease their acclamations—He reproves vice, and sinners overawed retire, determined on His destruction. The hour and the power of darkness was come, and the Saviour of mankind was apprehended, insulted, and nailed to the accursed tree between two malefactors. The Saviour bowed His head and gave up the ghost. This was, if not the hour of despair to spiritual Israelites, at least it was the even of preparation—the season of trial. Even those who had imbibed the spirit of prophecy had much to agitate and perplex their minds. The promises of God they could not doubt, but how they were to receive fulfilment was beyond their comprehension. The faithful disciples were scattered as sheep without a shepherd. The mangled body of the Saviour was entombed; and hope, though still lingering in the breast scarcely durst embody a wish. The Jewish Sabbath passed, and a slumbering Saviour burst the bands of death asunder, triumphed over death, and him who had the power of death. The preparation over, the trial in the Divine economy had accomplished its purpose, and a different scene is now presented to our contemplation. A triumphant Saviour, enraptured disciples, a stupefied Sanhedrin, an amazed multitude, a Conqueror ascending on high, bearing gifts for men, the Spirit bestowed at Pentecost, the heralds of the Cross endowed with miraculous gifts, numbers added to the Church, and Christianity proclaimed throughout the vast extent of the Roman Empire. The night of diffidence, doubt, and perplexity was the immediate harbinger of confidence, assurance, and clear manifestations of Heaven's approbation. In proportion as the even of preparation was awfully portentous and severely trying, so were the triumphs which followed and the pleasures which the faithful enjoyed.

II. **Life is a time of preparation for every individual, and either works for his good or evil according as he is exercised.**—From a consideration of



the character of the Creator, we conclude that benevolence is an essential attribute of His nature, and that His tender mercies will appear throughout all His works. This world, as wheeled into space, was crowned with beauty. It was worthy of the creating hand of a benevolent Being, and a suitable abode for innocence and happy creatures. Every creature is finite, and, coming perfect from the hand of God, may become imperfect from personal acts. By the Fall man was not only liable to punishment, but had become morally depraved. Christ by dying bore the penalty of a violated law, and thus delivered believers from punishment, and He procured the agency of the Spirit to create the heart anew, and thus restored the Divine image which was lost by sin. The deliverance from punishment which Christ effected for believers is an act, and is called "justification"; the renewing of the heart is a work, and is called "sanctification." The latter being progressive, though an act of grace, is accomplished by means. Life to Christians frequently is a chequered scene, and at every remarkable stage of their pilgrimage to eternity fresh proofs of an unseen directing Power are furnished. They are often led by a way which they know not, and conducted to an issue which they did not anticipate. Ordinary occurrences are much under our own control, and by certain modes of action we can in not a few cases predict the result. Circumstances, however, which we did not foresee, and which from our ignorance of the cause we term accidents, give new directions to our plans, and change in a greater or less degree the aspect of our personal history. Prosperity engenders pride, and adversity balances in some minds the actuating powers. A sickly existence may preserve the soul in health. Bereavements loosen the heart from created objects. All works for the good of the Christian, and the fluctuations to which he is exposed, prepare his mind for the spiritual employments of heaven. Every individual in future will be rewarded according to his works. As we sow so shall we reap. He that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly. Among the angelic host there are various degrees, and though all are happy in heaven the capacity for enjoyment is infinitely varied. As vessels all are full to overflowing, but all cannot partake of the same extent of enjoyment. In the joy of our Lord as we have employed our talents so will be the measure of our reward.—*A. Robertson.*

*The dead Christ.*—Here we behold the dead Christ. We follow not the departed spirit in its sojourn till the third day, or speculate on its disembodied occupation. We do not attempt to dwell on the incarnate mystery of the Son of God still united to the body of death. We contemplate the sacred body, the movements of affection and faith called forth by it, and the providential circumstances attending the sepulture.

**I. The reality of the dead Christ.**—1. The body of Jesus. How affecting the sight of a dead body! Motionless, inert, cold, and pale: the blood no longer circulates, the heart has ceased to beat or the bosom to heave, the eye emits no flash—all is fixed, dull, marbled, and silent. Deaf, dumb, blind, palsied, beauty itself vanishes, corruption hastens, the last feature is obliterated, and all that remains is the lifeless clay. And this was the powerful frame, the fair countenance, the fine organisation; this was the active, indefatigable machine of life; this was the outward man, and tabernacle of the friendship and love of home and of business life, that have passed into memory. How immeasurably affecting to gaze on the dead body of a friend, and that the nearest and dearest of the earth, and the most revered, on whom we have trusted, depended, and with whom we have taken sweet counsel—a guardian and a friend, a more than half of our soul! How keenly all this was felt by the stunned disciples and the mourning women as they gazed on the lifeless form still suspended on the

cross, and withdrew, leaving it in the rough custody of the soldiers, possibly to behold it no more! 2. The dead body of Jesus. More than the common mystery of death is here. This was He "who should have redeemed Israel." This was He who seemed death-proof, who had power over death, who gave back to the widow of Nain her son from the bier, and Lazarus to his sisters from his four days' grave. This was He who did so many "mighty works" that all marvelled. Yet here death has laid its cold grasp even upon Him. "Son of Man," "Son of Abraham," "Son of David," "Son of God," so named, so proved, so believed, and held, and loved; yet is this His dead, His pulseless form. How comes it that death hath this "dominion over Him"? They are not yet able rightly to answer. "Great is the mystery of godliness." "Crucified through weakness." Lo! the dead Christ. 3. Where is redemption now? What chapter, what verse, is this? Where stands the world, the Church, redeemed or unredeemed? Was redemption yet complete? It was impossible, doubtless, for Christ to fail -- impossible for the Son of God. Yet we see how slight-seeming are the links of events, how frail-looking is the agency, how hopeless to all sense as we gaze on the dead Christ! The wisdom of God is foolishness with men. 4. It is upon this dead body we must continue to fix our eye. We must understand by faith that the dead Christ fulfils a great part in the history and economy of our salvation. We are allowed to gaze until the reality of His death is pressed home on our soul. There in that dead body we see the power of the law. Who can stand against that stroke and live? Christ Himself is smitten by it to the dust of death. His connexion with us, His adoption of our liabilities, His taking of our sins, though Himself spotless and righteous, lays Him low. See in the dead Redeemer the deadliness of our sins. "He was wounded for our transgressions . . . the chastisement of our peace was upon Him." 5. To us it is now easy and possible to see the end from the beginning. In the dead Christ is the token of the finished work of Calvary -- the foundation of redemption. He has laid down His life. He has yet "to take it again." A dead Jesus, a disembodied Christ, fulfils not all the offices of Redeemer. The gospel is not the story of one who died and "saw corruption," like other hopes of the world, but of One who died for our sins, and was buried and rose again, and saw no corruption, whom yet we shall behold as He is now reigning in glory.

**II. The preciousness of the dead Christ.** How precious is that dead body! It is to be the transformed and glorified organ of the living Redeemer through all ages. It must needs ascend incorruptible and unmitigated to the heavens. But how shall this be, exposed to the indignity and careless scorn of the world, with no shield, no guardianship, but the military watch, all the disciples terrified and fled? And is this Providence, we ask, that cares for the sparrow's fall and numbers the hairs of our head? How loose all seems, how casual, how easily natural, as if there were no more care in heaven for this sacred body than for the malefactor's corpse or the torn prey of the fields! Yes, this is Providence, which finds its instrument in every fluctuation of human feeling, in every incident and circumstance of the hour, all united by invisible connexions to the past and to the future, a line of purpose and of agency stretching from the throne of God through all history, and joining the eternities. Do not fear, mournful soul, for the dead Christ! Wait and watch but long enough and it shall not be unduly long: you shall see stirrings of life beneath the shroud, the colour of resurrection on the pallid cheek; you shall behold the old glistening of the eye of love, you shall see the erect, resuscitated form, hear the footstep of the Conqueror of death, and the tones of "the voice that was still." This shall be for Mary and John, and Peter and Thomas, in after-time, not distant; but now this dead body, so precious and imperilled, is taken into unexpected care and is protected by unlikely means. "There is no wisdom nor understanding

nor counsel against the Lord." The body of Jesus is brought safely through the dark passage of history—some one and something ever provided for its protection and honour. God had ready not His angels only, but His centurion and His Pilate, His Joseph and His Nicodemus—He had ready the willing and the unwilling to do service to the dead Christ. It was in full assurance of this that Jesus fell asleep. "Thou wilt not leave My soul to Sheol, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." The garden was there and the tomb, and the heart of its owner ready to yield to the touch of His grace. The hour of the last word of Calvary was timed by no wisdom of men, and it anticipated and baffled their reckless desires; and all that looked so purposeless and of accident was part of the sublime but unobserved concatenations of Heaven (Acts iv. 27, 28).

III. *The influence of the dead Christ.*—How powerful and mysterious the influence of death! How it softens and awes, puts men on honour and conscience, and brings home a sense of the invisible world! See it gathering long-sundered friends from far and near, renewing ties of nature and grace, imposing order as with authority, silencing the busy tongue! See the dead Christ drawing, as by some magnet, the secret admirer, the unavowed friend, the unsuspected lover, the cold neighbour, the remorseful wrong-doer, the abashed ingrate, the very distant relative, the negligent and unfriendly one of former days, as though summoned to-day before some unseen tribunal, to say why it was they thought and spoke and acted so! But what is the influence of the dead Christ? There are shattered hopes, but no doubts of the heart. Mystery shrouds all, but the Lord and Master lost was never more precious. Where there was love before, now it gushes from the hearts of those womanly believers; where it was unavowed, it is now expressed; where it was secret, it now reveals itself; where it was remorseful and penitent, it is now of inexpressible contrition; where it was intimate and thrice endeared, it now presses home the sense of irreparable loss; where it cannot bear disappointment, it bursts into language which refuses comfort; where it was halting and fearing, it shoots into sudden strength; where it has been false, it works despair; Judas cannot bear the face of the dead Christ, and rushes to his place; Peter cannot sleep till he sees it again; John must reach the heart of the mystery of the bosom on which he leaned; the Marys and the loving women "prevent the dawning," that they may anoint the body of the blessed dead. Seeing we know the mystery of the dead Christ, let us thank God for His adorable providence in grace and redemption, by which "all things work together for good to them that love God." And let us "thus judge that, if one died for all, then all were dead . . . that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even we also should walk in newness of life."—*G. C. Hutton, D.D.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 43-46. *Joseph of Arimathea.*—See in this "good and just" man of Arimathea the long embrace and tender constancy of Jesus' love to us. First, He puts into our heart the good desire to serve Him; then He brings our purpose to good effect; and afterwards, instead of claiming the work as His, He allows it to be our own. His memory will not forget it, His affection will not leave it; but long

after we are gone He still comes to it, looks on it, and keeps it up like a parent treasuring the little things of a departed child, and keeping the little garden it used to work in and call its own.—*T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.*

Ver. 46. *The Saviour's grave.*—Jerusalem was surrounded by graves cut out of the limestone rock. Yet it seems strange that in the spot recently



identified by Conder and Sir William Dawson as Calvary you may still find a garden, and in the garden a sepulchre, and the sepulchre closed with a huge circular stone, like a colossal grindstone, which, rolling in a groove cut for it, would cover or expose the opening into the tomb as you might move it. Perhaps it was to spite Joseph that they had the Saviour crucified in this spot near his garden. If so, the spite served Joseph well. None other had lain in this grave. It was sacred to Him. Christ died what one may call a borrowed death; He is laid in a borrowed tomb. Only the death was the most shameful of all deaths; while the grave is rich and noble. There is much about this grave-dwelling of the Saviour worthy of earnest thought. 1. A grave seems an item in the experience of all things good. Nothing great or good seems to go straight to its throne, but always through a grave. Good causes seem always lost before they are won, the dark hour of weakness being used of God to draw forth the allegiance that gives them victory. The testimony of prophets seemed generally to find only a grave, and "who hath believed our report?" has been its constant epitaph. Religion,

truth, and goodness go not through the world in bright apparel, but persecuted, dying, and finding graves. Judge not success by seeming, power by popularity. The great Christ found a grave. 2. It was meet Christ should enter our graves, for all the world is but a grave—a vast cemetery where we transact a little business and indulge a little pleasure before lying down beside the dead. There is no household without its grave. Life is only a procession to our own funeral. So Christ would not have thoroughly come to the world if He had not come to our grave. 3. The Saviour hallows the grave by occupying it. He removes its reproach, dispels its terrors. When He enters it, He shews it is one of "the places of God's dominion," a region where life is not extinct and God's mercy not vanished away. Since that new tomb was occupied all graves have become new, and thoughts of rest, sleep, refreshment, waking, are now associated with them. When death fixed its sting in Christ, it lost it for all who follow Christ. 4. We now can feel "those who sleep in Jesus" are safe. Where God permitted His Son to lie we may safely place our dear dead.—*R. Glover.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XV.

Vers. 3-5. *Silence and self-control.*—Moltke, the great strategist, was a man of lowly habits and few words. He has been described as a man "who can hold his tongue in seven languages!"

Ver. 10. *Envy.*—Dionysius the tyrant, out of envy, punished Philoxenus the musician because he could sing, and Plato the philosopher because he could dispute, better than himself.

Vers. 11-14. *A change of national sentiment.*—Englishmen can very well understand what a change of national sentiment means—what it is for a ruler to have the confidence of the nation at one time and lose it at another. When that happens, and is proved to have happened by a general election, there need not be any voters—there seldom are more than a few scores or hundreds—who actually change sides, who vote one way one time and the opposite way

another. But the party that was dominant at one time, that knew what it wanted and meant to get it, is at another time half-hearted and doubtful; if they will not vote against their old party they perhaps do not care to vote at all, or at any rate they do not care to try to convince others, to gain over those who are doubtful, or to urge to activity those who are indifferent, or still more half-hearted than themselves.—*W. H. Simcoe.*

*Fickleness of popularity.*—On July 25th, 1553, Northumberland and Lord Ambrose Dudley were brought in from Cambridge, escorted by Grey and Arundel, with four hundred of the Guards. Detachments of troops were posted all along the streets from Bishopsgate, where the duke would enter, to the Tower, to prevent the mob from tearing him to pieces. It was but twelve days since he had ridden out from that gate in the splendour of his power: he was now assailed from all sides with

yells and execrations; bareheaded with cap in hand, he bowed to the crowd as he rode on, as if to win some compassion from them; but so recent a humility could find no favour. His scarlet cloak was plucked from his back; the only sounds which greeted his ears were, "Traitor! traitor! Death to the traitor!" And he hid his face, sick at heart with shame, and Lord Ambrose at the gate of the Tower was seen to burst into tears.—*J. A. Froude.*

*Inherent weakness of human nature.*—The poet has said, "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her." Can you say that of human nature?

Ver. 13. *The world's reception of Christ.*—It is said of Dr. Robertson, the celebrated historian, that, preaching once in the forenoon, he affirmed, in the words of the ancient heathen, that "if perfect virtue were to descend to the earth clothed in a human form, all the world would fall prostrate and worship her." In the afternoon Dr. Erskine, his colleague, remarked, on the contrary, that "perfect virtue, in the human nature of the Saviour of mankind, had indeed appeared on the earth; but, instead of being universally worshipped, the general cry of His countrymen was, 'Crucify Him! crucify Him!'"

Ver. 15. *Scourging.*—We cannot tell what that Roman punishment was; we read about it in the olden books, but men do not understand what they read so much as what they feel. The victim was tied by the hands to a post or standard; he was compelled to assume a stooping position; the knotted thong was in the hands of a Roman executioner, and he administered the punishment largely according to his own will or passion. We have heard of the knout in Russia; in our own land we have the "cat," so feared by felons; in the Roman law there was this arrangement for scourging, that men might be humbled as well as punished, that the truth might be extorted from them as well as a penalty inflicted, that they might be brought into lowliness of mind and submissiveness of temper, so that the judge could do with them what he pleased. The hands of Christ were tied to the stake, the flagellum was used upon His naked back; He was scourged by Roman hands.—*J. Parker, D.D.*

Ver. 20. *Christ mocked.*—A strange illustration of the scene is afforded by what happened only a few years afterwards at Alexandria, when the people, in derision of King Agrippa I., arrayed a well-known maniac in a common door-mat, put a papyrus crown on his head, and a reed in his hand, and saluted him as "maris" (lord).—*A. Eldersheim, D.D.*

Ver. 21. *The shape of the Cross.*—The shape of the Cross on which our Lord suffered has been much debated. Some ancient Fathers, fancying they found a typical reference in the crossing of the hands over the head of the scape-goat, and in the peculiar mode in which Jacob blessed his grandsons, often assumed that it was in the form of what is commonly called a St. Andrew's cross; others again, seeing in the mystical mark or Tauset upon the foreheads of the righteous in Ezekiel's vision a foreshadowing of the Cross, concluded that it was like that which bears the name of St. Anthony, in form like a capital T. It is far more probable that it was what is known familiarly as the Latin cross. It was prefigured by the transverse spits which the priest placed in the paschal lamb. Its four arms, pointing to the four quarters of the globe, symbolised "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of Christ's universal Church. It is a strong argument in favour of this form that "the inscription" was set above the head of the Crucified, which would be impossible in either of the other forms.—*Dean Luckock.*

Ver. 24. *Stripped of His raiment.*—Dr. Norman Macleod relates the following incident: "Tom Baird, the carter, the beadle of my working-man's church, was as noble a fellow as ever lived—God-fearing, true, unselfish. I shall never forget what he said when I asked him to stand at the door of the working-man's congregation, and when I thought he was unwilling to do so in his working clothes. 'If,' said I, 'you don't like to do it, Tom; if you are ashamed—' 'Ashamed!' he exclaimed, as he turned round upon me, 'I'm mair ashamed o' yersel' sir. Div ye think that I believe, as ye ken I do, that Jesus Christ, who died for me, was stripped o' His raiment on the Cross, and that I—— Na, na, I'm proud to stand at the door.' Dear, good fellow! There he stood for seven winters, without a sixpence of pay, all from love, though at my request the working congregation gave him a silver watch. When he was dying from small-pox, the same unselfish nature appeared. When asked if they would let me know, he replied: 'There's nae man leevin' I like as I do him. I know he would come. But he shouldna' come on account of his wife and bairns, and so ye maunna' tell him!' I never saw him in his illness, never hearing of his danger till it was too late."

*A hardened gamester.*—There was a profigate gamester whose conversion was attempted by some honest monks, and they, in order to break his heart for sin, put into his hands a fine picture of the crucifixion of Christ; but when they inquired what he was studying so intently in the picture, hoping his conversion was going forward, he replied,

"I was examining whether the dice with which the soldiers are casting lots for the garment be like ours." This man too well resembles bad men in the ceremonies of religion, for their hearts guide their eyes to what may nourish their vices, not to what would destroy them.

Ver. 25. *The Cross explains the world's mystery.*—In the Palace of Justice at Rome they take you sometimes into a chamber with strangely painted frescoes on the ceiling, and around the walls, and upon the floor, in all kinds of grotesque forms. You cannot reduce them to harmony; you cannot make out the perspective; it is all a bewildering maze of confusion. But there is one spot upon the floor of that room, and one only, standing upon which every line falls into harmony; the perspective is perfect, the picture flashes out upon you, instinct with meaning in every line and panel. You can see at that point, and that only, the design of the artist that painted it. I believe that this world is just as bewildering a maze looked at at every point except one. I look back upon the records of history; I look upon the speculations of science; I endeavour to gaze into the future of this world's career; wherever I turn I am opposed by the mysteries that hem me in and crush me down, until I take my stand at the foot of the Cross. Then darkness and discord become light and harmony; the mystery is solved; the night that shuts me in becomes radiant with the Divine light and glory. At the foot of the Cross art, science, literature, history, become at once to me a Divine, a glorious, and a blessed thing. And so I claim for my Lord His rightful dominion over all the works of His hands. We will gather all the beauties of art, all the treasures of music, all that is brightest and best in this world, and we will lay them down at His feet; for "worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive might, and majesty, and riches, and power, and honour, and glory." His is the sceptre, His is the right, His this universal world.—*Dr. Manning.*

*The Cross the sufferer's support.*—A poor woman in a ward of one of the great London hospitals had to undergo a fearful operation, and as a special favour besought that it might be performed on Good Friday, which was close at hand, that the reflexion on her Redeemer's agony might the better enable her to endure her own sufferings.—A preacher has found an illustration of the saving efficacy of the Redeemer's work in the great breakwater or pier which stretches in front of Plymouth Harbour, on which all the force of the storms expend their violence, and behind whose solid strength the ships of many a distant land find shelter and security. So does the atonement of Christ offer us rest for our souls, if only we seek it as our

refuge; and so too, when the things of this world are full of bitterness, we shall find life sweetened and purified by means of the Cross.

Ver. 31. *Salvation of others by self-sacrifice.*—1. A converted Japanese was explaining the Atonement. He used this touching illustration: A woman was crossing the great plain. She carried a child on her back. When in the midst of the plain, she looked suddenly behind her and saw that it was afire. She had but a moment to think. She laid down the child, desperately scooped with her hands a hole in the earth, with trembling haste laid the child in it, and covered it with her own body. There they found the two. The poor mother was dead, but the child was saved. "So Jesus died for me," said the simple-hearted convert. "That I might live, He put His body between me and everlasting fire." 2. When Dr. Bushnell, after telling one of his children that if he touched the plants in the conservatory his own geranium, as a penalty, should be put in the cellar, and, seeing the child disobey, put his own geranium, the largest and most beautiful of all, into the cellar instead, the boy understood the sacrifice of feelings thus made—that if he was to be spared, and his father's word respected, his father must suffer. 3. A wealthy young man, living in London, undertook to improve the condition of the poor of that vast city. For this purpose he visited them and gave away large sums. But within a short time he discovered that, if he was to do any permanent good, he must live among them. He did not hesitate. He took a lodging in the heart of the Seven Dials, the worst district of the city. There he toiled until he died. He was cut off in the beginning of his work, but he succeeded. He had found the secret of his calling—that if he would save, he must suffer.

*Self-sacrificing devotion.*—Edwin, King of Northumbria, in 617 gave audience to an envoy from the King of Wessex. In the midst of the conference the envoy started to his feet, drew a dagger from his robe, and rushed madly on the king. Lilla, one of the royal band, threw himself between Edwin and the assassin; but so furious was the stroke that even through Lilla's body the dagger still reached its aim. The king, however, soon recovered, though his devoted servant died.

*Sacrifice to save.*—In the early days of the American settlement Captain John Smith was among the most intrepid of the explorers, and earned for himself the title of "Father of the Colony." He was once seized by the Indians and held in captivity, being afterwards sentenced to death. A tender-hearted Indian maiden, touched with pity, interceded for him, but in vain, and then



flung herself beneath the executioner's axe, and clasped the victim in her arms, risking her own life, but saving the captain and the colony of Virginia.

Ver. 33. *Christ eclipsed*.—A pious astronomer, in describing an eclipse which he witnessed in Norway, says: "I watched the instantaneous extinction of light, and saw the glorious scene on which I had been gazing turned into darkness. All the horizon seemed to speak of terror, death, and judgment; and overhead sat, not the clear flood of light which a starry night sends down, but there hung over me dark and leaden blackness, which seemed as if it would crush me into the earth. And as I beheld it I thought, 'How miserable is the soul to whom Christ is eclipsed!'" The thought was answered by a voice; for a fierce and powerful seabird which had been swooping around us, apparently infuriated at our intrusion on its domain, poured out a scream of despairing agony when it was surprised in the darkness." What, then, will be the fearful surprise when the lost soul finds itself in that world "where hope withering flees, and mercy sighs, Farewell!"

*Nature's sympathy with her Lord*.—We feel a deep appropriateness in the sympathy of nature with the crucifixion of our Lord, in the profound darkness that overspread the earth as the outer token of the spiritual darkness that overwhelmed His soul, and in the rending of the rocks that accompanied the rending of His mortal flesh and the separation between soul and body. Superstition has sought for farther proofs than those which Scripture gives of such sympathy, and imagined that it has found them in the continual trembling to this day of the leaves of the aspen when all around is still, as if in shuddering recollection of the use made of its wood for the construction of the cross; and also in the dark stains that appear ineffaceably on the leaves and the crimson spots that mingle with the white blossoms on one of the commonest weeds of our cornfields, said by tradition to have grown beneath the Cross. And the scarlet anemones, which blaze in spring-like embodied flames on the hills of Palestine, are called by the Christian residents "blood-drops of Christ," under the idea that these beautiful flowers were dyed with the blood that issued from our Saviour's pierced side. Unfounded as these superstitions are, it must be confessed, notwithstanding, that there is something in them that appeals to our natural sense of fitness. It is difficult to realise that nature should hold on serenely in her accustomed way while her Lord was dying. We should have expected that the supernatural darkness would have continued all the time—that the fields would languish and the flowers fade in token of their deep sympathy with the

death of Him who gave them all their beauty, and whose smile of blessing rested always upon them while He trod the earth,  
—*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*

Ver. 37. *The death of Death*.—A Greenland missionary relates the following: "Last winter, Jacob, a native assistant of mine, was summoned to his rest. On the day before his death, having been asked how he felt, he replied, 'I shall not rise from this bed again; I am called hence to the Lord.' He then raised his arm, stretched it out and said, 'Look! my arm is nothing but bones and skin. It is the same with my earthly body: the flesh is dead within me; my desire is fixed on my heavenly country—that country where I shall behold Him who loves me and whom I love. Yes, I shall see Him shortly.' When asked whether he feared death, 'Oh no,' he answered; 'how can I love Christ and fear death? The death of Christ was the death of Death.'"

Ver. 39. *Power of the Cross*.—The well-known story of Colonel Gardiner's conversion illustrates the power of the Cross. He lived a gay life, and after having spent the Sunday evening in carousing retired to his room, when he took up a book entitled *The Christian Soldier*, intending to make fun of it. He fell asleep with the book in his hand, and dreamed: a blaze of light shone on the book, and overhead he saw suspended in the air a vivid representation of the Saviour on the Cross. Distinctly he heard a voice saying, "This I did for thee: what hast thou done for Me?" He awoke, and filled with contrition he sought and found pardon and peace.—One afternoon a man stood in Antwerp Cathedral gazing at Rubens' "Descent from the Cross." He was so absorbed in what he saw, that when the verger came and told him it was time to close the cathedral he exclaimed, "No, no, not yet; wait until they get Him down."

*Involuntary testimony to the Divinity of Christ*.—A well-known learned man of Saxony, after having all his life long attacked Jesus and His gospel with all the weapons of sophistry he could command, was in his old age partially deprived of his reason, chiefly through the fear of death, and frequently fell into religious paroxysms of a peculiar nature. He was almost daily observed conversing with himself, while pacing to and fro in his chamber, on one of the walls of which, between other pictures, hung one of the Saviour. Repeatedly he halted before the latter, and said in a horrifying tone of voice, "After all, Thou wast only a man." Then after a short pause he would continue, "What wast Thou more than a man? Ought I to worship Thee? No, I will not worship Thee, for Thou art only Rabbi Jesus, Joseph's son, of Nazareth." Uttering these

words, he would return with a deeply affected countenance, and exclaim, "What dost Thou say? That Thou camest from above! How terribly Thou eyest me! Oh, Thou art dreadful! But Thou art only a man, after all!" Then he would again rush away, but soon return with faltering step, crying out, "What! Art Thou in reality the Son of God?" The same scenes were daily renewed, till the unhappy man, struck by paralysis, dropped down dead; and then really stood before his Judge, who, even in His picture had so strikingly and overpoweringly judged him.

*Rousseau's testimony to the death of Christ.*—Rousseau once wrote in one of his better moments that "if the death of Socrates was that of a sage, the death of Jesus was that of a God." It may be too, probably, that he wrote not as one who adores, but as one who admires. Bitter epigrams on Rousseau's sentence were not wanting. "It may be a pretty turn," some one said, "but then, unluckily, it is absurd." But He who in one undivided Person is God and Man, who died His death, is so different from all others that the paradox of Rousseau is literally true.—*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*

Ver. 43. *Great occasions disclose great qualities.*—Some natures need powerful incentives to draw out their better traits and nobler qualities. Close to Bracelet Bay, Mumbles, is a bell-buoy marking a concealed rock. This bell rings only in the storm. It is only when the wind is high and the billows roll and beat against it that it gives forth the music that is in it.

*Glastonbury.*—In the middle of the county

of Somerset there is a green and open vale, through which several small rivers flow quietly along towards the western channel. These waters, as they wind through the meadows, form a sort of island, upon which may still be seen the grey ruins of an ancient abbey. These ruins are of an extent and richness which tell of an institution once important. Among them one can trace the outline of a solitary chapel, standing westward and apart. This chapel was dedicated to Joseph of Arimathea, and it was ever the fixed and firm belief of all the inmates of the abbey, and the long tradition of preceding generations, that in this remote and sheltered place Joseph of Arimathea had planted a mission, and had himself passed the latter years of his life. Here he had built a fragile church, which persevering piety renewed with increasing beauty from age to age. Here he who had buried Jesus had himself found a grave, and here his Heavenly Saviour had paid him back a hundredfold his garden-grave at Calvary, and had written an epitaph of blessing on his work of love, until it grew into a stately pile, and became a great light of learning and lamp of truth in the Western world. Such was the beginning of Avalon, the famed Abbey of Glastonbury, where men said King Arthur lies asleep, and where King Alfred found his shelter from the Danes; but chiefly where Joseph of Arimathea, the councillor of the East, found both his first and last refuge from the world, and was in his turn "laid in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid."—*T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.*

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Had bought sweet spices.**—Simply, *bought spices*. No time specified, merely the fact stated. From Luke xxiii. 56 we gather (unless, indeed, there were two companies of women) that the purchase was made before the Sabbath began. St. Mark's point is, that the women *bought spices some time or other*—no matter when—in order that when the Sabbath was over they might come and anoint the body of the Lord. They seem to have wished to complete the imperfect embalming which Joseph and Nicodemus had hastily begun. See John xix. 39, 40, and cp. 2 Chron. xvi. 14.

Ver. 2. **They came, etc.**—*They come* (so as to be) *at the sepulchre when the sun had risen*. That is, they start from home very early, with the object of reaching their destination soon after daylight.

Ver. 3. **The door of the sepulchre.**—"There was generally an approach to the tomb open to the sky; then a low entrance on the side of the rock, leading into a square chamber, on one side of which was a recess for the body, about three feet deep, with a low arch over it. The stone here referred to would be the stone which covered the actual entrance into the vault. It would probably be not less than six feet in breadth and three in height." Had the women known of the arrangement recorded in Matt. xxvii. 62-66, they might have hesitated about visiting the tomb that day at all.

Ver. 4. **Looked.**—*Looked up*—"the only, but sufficient, proof that Calvary was a hill."

Ver. 5. While Mary Magdalene, after a hasty glance, sped away to inform Peter and John that the sepulchre had been, as she supposed, rifled (John xx. 1, 2), the other women made bold to enter and inspect for themselves. **Affrighted.**—The word, used only by St. Mark, signifies amazement blended with fear. It is found also in chaps. ix. 15, xiv. 34, xvi. 6. Such experiences as these women were now passing through filled them with awestruck surprise.

Ver. 7. **And Peter.**—With what solemnity the apostle would utter these words as he recounted the matter to St. Mark!

Ver. 8. **Quickly.**—Omit. **Fled.**—Not as Mary Magdalene had done, in terror and hopelessness, but full of bewildered excitement, for agitation and ecstacy had them in its grip. *And to no one said they anything, for they were afraid to pause until they had delivered their message to the disciples and Peter.*

Vers. 9-20. See Appendix, p. 641.

Ver. 15. **Go ye into all the world.**—That is to say, "Go wherever ye will, wherever ye can, that the gospel may be diffused: no limits of place are henceforth prescribed to you." **Every creature.**—Every human creature. Cp. "all nations" (Matt. xx. 19), as contrasted with the one Jewish nation to which their labours hitherto had been restricted. See Matt. x. 5.

Ver. 16. **He that believeth not.**—Against heretics denying, from the omission in this latter clause, the necessity of baptism, it is sufficient to reply that baptism, if not a necessary means of grace, would not have been introduced as such, and without qualification, in the previous clause—to say nothing of the assertion of its necessity elsewhere (*e.g.* John iii. 3). Nor, indeed, is the insistence on baptism really absent from this clause after all; although not verbally expressed, it is evidently implied; the previous conjunction of the two—faith and baptism—is such that to accept or deny one is to accept or deny both. Moreover, saving faith is practical, and includes the observance of all things enjoined, of which baptism is among the first.

Ver. 17. **These signs shall follow them that believe.**—Not to be understood of every believer, nor of all times alike. Miracles were more needed while the Church was in its infancy than after it had obtained a secure footing in the world. Yet it must not be concluded that the power of miracles in the body of the faithful is absolutely extinct. We dare not attempt to draw the line, and say that miracles were possible up to such a date, but not beyond, since God has not drawn any such line for us Himself. To be critical in investigating evidence is wise and right; to be sceptical, in the teeth of evidence, is foolish and wrong.

Vers. 19, 20. Mark the antithesis. The Lord, for His part, was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God—the seat of power; and they, for their part, went forth into the world to do as He had bidden them, and, doing it, they were sustained and reinforced by His almighty aid.

### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—8.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxviii. 1-8; LUKE xxiv. 1-12; JOHN xx. 1-10.)

*The pious women visiting the sepulchre.*—The present hopes of the followers of Jesus had been destroyed and their future expectations frustrated by the ignominious death of their Lord. When they beheld the accomplishment of all which the malice of His enemies could inflict, they seem to have given way to their feelings of despondency and dismay. But while the most favoured of the apostles had retired from the place where He was put to death, and from the garden in which they had seen His body laid and a large stone rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre, there were others whose faith and love had survived all these trials (Mark xv. 40, 41). During our Saviour's life these pious women had ministered to Him of their substance. They had followed Him out of the distant part of the country in which they resided; and they were still found, in that hour of suffering, hoping against hope, or desirous to testify to the end the love which they bore to Him who had loved them. When, at a later hour of the same mournful day, the body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross and laid in the new sepulchre, "wherein never man before was laid," the same affectionate attendants still followed their Lord (Luke xxiii. 35). "As yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead."



But perceiving that they who had in a hurried manner buried the body of Jesus had not embalmed it, as the manner of the Jews was to bury, but had merely wrapped the body in linen with dry spices, they determined to perform that last office of affectionate care, and "returned, and prepared" the "spices and ointments" necessary for the purpose, and "rested the Sabbath day, according to the commandment." "And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." They knew not that the heavy stone which they had seen placed over the mouth of the sepulchre had been farther secured by having been sealed with a seal and guarded by soldiers set as a watch. But they were aware that, even without such a precaution, there was an impediment to the accomplishment of their pious intention insurmountable by their own strength. Still they persevered in their exertions, though not without some secret misgivings that their labour would be in vain (ver. 3). But as soon as they reached the sepulchre all their apprehensions were proved to have been groundless. They came but to embalm the body of Jesus; they expected to have found a lifeless corpse; and lo! a vision of angels, which told them that He was risen from the dead.

I. The constancy of these pious women, contrasted with the comparative weakness of the faith even of the apostles, may remind us that the "faith which worketh by love," the religion of the heart, is by no means in proportion to the outward advantages which different individuals may possess. There may be often found among the comparatively unlearned, in the meanest stations and in circumstances of the greatest apparent distress, a practical acquaintance with vital religion, a firm trust in God, an abiding faith in the merits of the Saviour, and a sense of the real consolations arising from a spiritual frame of mind, which may well serve as an encouragement and as a lesson to others who have been blessed with far greater opportunities of religious improvement. Such examples teach us, in language which cannot be misunderstood, what a treasure true religion is; for it is found supplying, and more than supplying, the want of all which this world can afford.

II. Another reflexion arising from this history is, that **we are often ignorant of obstacles which really beset our path of duty, while we exaggerate to ourselves the magnitude of those with which we are acquainted.** How many, when inquiry is made respecting their religious condition, are found to have fixed their apprehensions upon some circumstances which they conceived to be the principal, if not the only, bar to their advancement in piety! Some will complain of the *cares* of life. Before the eyes of others there may be set some trial of temper, some weakness of which they are especially conscious, some trouble which at present occupies their thoughts, or some easily besetting sin which they know not how to conquer or remove. And each of these may conceive that there is but this one barrier interposed between him and his duty. But when we are led thus unduly to estimate the magnitude of some one obstacle to a religious life, we overlook others of greater importance and still less surmountable by any powers of our own. If the sepulchre of Jesus was sealed with a seal to prevent all access from without, who knows not that the heart of man is by nature closed against Divine grace and remains dark and impervious to its holy light! If the sepulchre of Jesus was guarded with a band of soldiers, whose express duty it was to prevent the seal from being broken and the stone from being rolled away, who knows not what a band of evil passions and unholy desires and worldly thoughts besets the heart of man, and how the prince of the power of the air disposes his active and sleepless forces, to keep the thoughts and affections still cold and dark, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them!"

III. But while we thus learn justly to appreciate the real obstacles against which we have to contend, the example of the pious women may encourage us to persevere in the plain course of duty, in the firm persuasion that, although we cannot, by our own strength, roll away the stone from the sepulchre, yet that, however great it may be, there is a power which will remove it for us. There are periods when the heart even of the faithful Christian is weighed down with much sorrow. He is exposed to some great danger, or apprehends some severe trial. At such a time his faith is ready to fail him. He goes on his way, weary and sad at heart, although he knows that he is treading the direct path of Christian duty. But who shall set bounds to the mercy or power of God? When the Christian has accomplished his journey, he looks and sees that the stone is rolled away. Either his apprehensions are removed, or, if the trial which he feared has come upon him, strength has been given him to enable him to bear it. And if this be true in the trials which are of a temporary kind, so is it especially found in those which regard our spiritual state.

IV. If we persevere in faithful obedience, our exertions will often be blessed beyond our utmost hopes.—The pious women who visited the sepulchre of their Lord looked only for the sad satisfaction of preparing His body for the tomb. And the apprehension which chiefly weighed upon their minds was instantly removed, as soon as they looked and saw that the stone, which had appeared so great, was rolled away. And after they had been relieved from this fear, a new source of holy joy was unexpectedly opened to them. Their Lord was risen from the dead, no more to see corruption. And so assuredly will God deal with His servants at all times. With the temptation He will make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it; with the trial He will give strength; with the tribulation He will send patience; and with patience, experience; and with experience, hope.—*Prof. Temple Chevallier.*

Vers. 3, 4. *All difficulties surmounted by the faithful.*—If we look at the difficulties, trials, and sorrows which attend man from the cradle to the grave, and consider at the same time only man's strength, which is perfect weakness, we must say with the apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?" "Who then can be saved?" Happy is it for him who is brought to confess, "With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible"; for when men are brought to look out of themselves and to say, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" they have taken the first step towards its removal. 1. Sometimes the Christian is in great fear of danger, in common with other men who fear not God. He sees no means of escape—there may be no chance of it, as the world would say; a fatal sickness is around him, or he is in the power of an enemy. But is he without comfort or resource? Nay, he remembers Joseph in Egypt, Lot in Sodom, Daniel in the lions' den, the three children in the furnace, Israel at the Red Sea, Paul and Silas and Peter in prison; and when ready to faint, and cry, "Who shall roll away the stone?" he hears again those cheering words, "He shall give His angels charge over thee," etc. "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." 2. Sometimes the Christian is poor and in misery, and knows not to-day how he shall live to-morrow; distress presses him hard; he is in great straits, and there seems no help for it; he cannot see the least prospect of his condition being bettered: or he may have a dread that poverty must soon come upon him; his faith is tried to the uttermost; bad success, misfortunes of various kinds, daily threaten him. And is he without comfort or hope? Does he forget Hagar in the desert, the Israelites in the wilderness, Elijah at the brook Cherith, the widow and her cruse of oil? 3. The Christian is sometimes much oppressed and made to suffer under false accusations, his character mistaken, words misrepresented, motives misunderstood and falsely stated. Who shall roll away

the stone? But he is not without great comfort under all this, for he calls to mind our Saviour's words (Matt. v. 11, 12). He does not forget that Christ "came unto His own, and His own received Him not"; "He was despised and rejected of men"; "He was reviled." If he be inclined to think that God hath forsaken him, he hears God reasoning with him thus: Isa. xl. 27; Ps. xxxvii. 5-7. 4. The Christian is sometimes sorely perplexed in some of his plans and undertakings: nothing he takes in hand seems to prosper; so many difficulties arise that he is tempted to yield to despair. But even here he can patiently abide; "in quietness and confidence is his strength"; he leans more unreservedly upon God: he waits His time; he knows that man's time is always ready—God's time may not be yet. He remembers that God often permits one to sow and another to reap, one man to begin and another to finish—as David, who prepared the materials, and Solomon, who built Him a house; and so looking steadfastly to Him, he sees the stone rolled away. 5. The Christian is sometimes in great doubt as to how he should act—whether this or that is his duty; in a strait betwixt two, or else in perplexity as to how he should perform that which he knows to be best. He is often haunted with the fear of consequences and of a doubtful mind, tossed to and fro like a wave of the sea. How comforting then are such words to him! (John vii. 17; Isa. l. 10; Ps. xcvii. 11; Isa. xxvi. 3). 6. But if ever the Christian is ready to say, "Who shall roll away the stone," it is when, having borne the Christian name, he is convicted of having lived as a stranger to Christ the hope of glory—of exhibiting in himself that sad contradiction, a worldly and unholy Christian. Who can tell the blessing to a soul, weary and heavy laden with the burden of its sins, of hearing such words as these, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee"? Who can tell the comfort of such consoling counsel as this? Claim the privileges of the covenant, the first of which is pardon and forgiveness through Christ, into whom ye were baptised. Treat God as your Father: you are not strangers and foreigners, though you have been bad and rebellious subjects; but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints. You have "liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus"; "and having a High Priest over the house of God, draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith": for though you have no power of yourselves to help yourself, you can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth you.—*E. J. Boyce, M.A.*

Vers. 5, 6. *The first preaching of the Resurrection.* Mark has scarcely anything to say about our Lord's appearance after the Resurrection. His object seems mainly to be to describe rather the manner in which the report of the Resurrection affected the disciples. And so he makes prominent the bewildered astonishment of the women. If the latter part of this chapter be his, he passes by the appearance of our Lord to Mary Magdalene and to the two travellers to Emmaus with just a word for each—contrasting singularly with the lovely narrative of the former in John's Gospel and with the detailed account of the latter in Luke's, he emphasises the incredulity of the twelve after receiving the reports. And in like manner he lays stress upon the unbelief and hardness of heart which the Lord rebuked.

I. *The first witness to the Resurrection.*—There are singular diversities in the four Gospels in the account of the angelic appearances, the number, occupation, and attitude of these superhuman persons; and contradictions may be spun, if one is so disposed, out of these varieties. But it is wiser to take another view of them, and to see in the varying reports—sometimes of one angel, sometimes two, sometimes of one sitting outside the sepulchre, sometimes one within, sometimes none—either different moments of time or differences produced by the different spiritual condition of the beholders. We know too little about the



laws of angelic appearances, we know too little about the relation in that high region between the seeing eye and the objects beheld, to venture to say that there is a contradiction where the narratives present variety. Enough for us to draw the lessons suggested by that quiet figure sitting there in the inner vestibule of the grave, gazing on the tomb where the Lord of men and angels had lain. He was a youth. "The oldest angels are the youngest," says the great mystic. He was "clothed in a long white garment," the sign at once of purity and of repose; and he was sitting in rapt contemplation and quiet adoration there, where the body of Jesus had lain. Wherefore was he there? Because that Cross strikes its power upwards as well as downwards—because He that had lain there is the Head of all creation, and the Lord of angels as well as of men—because that Resurrection following upon that Cross, "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places," opened a new and wonderful door into the unsounded and unfathomed abyss of Divine love—because into these things "angels desire to look," and, looking, are smitten with adoring wonder and flushed with the illumination of a new knowledge of what God is and of what man is to God. Farther, we see in that angel-presence not only the indication that Christ is his King as well as ours, but also the mark of his and all his fellows' sympathetic participation in whatsoever is of so deep interest to humanity. All the servants of our King in heaven and earth are one, and He sends forth His brightest and loftiest to be brethren and ministers to them who shall be "heirs of salvation."

**II. The triumphant light cast upon the cradle and the Cross.**—"Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified." Do you not catch a tone of wonder and a tone of triumph in this threefold particularising of the humanity, the lowly residence, and the ignominious death? All that lowliness, suffering, and shame are brought into comparison with the rising from the dead. The cradle is illuminated by the grave, the Cross by the empty sepulchre. As at the beginning there is a supernatural entrance into life, so at the end there is a supernatural resumption of it. The Birth corresponds with the Resurrection, and both witness to the Divinity. Brethren, let us lay this to heart—that unless we believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the saying "He was crucified" is the saddest word that can be spoken about any of the great ones of the past. "If He be not risen, our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain." "If Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins." But if what Easter Day commemorates be true, then upon all His earthly life is thrown a new light, and we first understand the Cross when we look upon the empty grave.

**III. The majestic announcement of the great fact, and its confirmation.**—"He is risen; He is not here." The first preacher of the Resurrection was an angel, a true ev-angel-ist. His message is conveyed in these brief sentences, unconnected with each other, in token, not of abruptness and haste, but of solemnity. "He is risen" is one word in the original—a sentence of one word, which announces the mightiest miracle that ever was wrought upon earth, a miracle which opens the door wide enough for all supernatural events recorded of Jesus Christ to find an entrance to the whole understanding and the reason. "He is risen." The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is declared by angel lips to be His own act. The Divine power of the Father's will did not work upon Him as from without to raise Him from the dead; but He, the embodiment of Divinity, raised Himself, even though it is also true that He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. These two things are not contradictory, but the former of them can only be predicated of Him; and it sets Him on a pedestal immeasurably above and infinitely apart from all those to whom life is communicated by a Divine act. He Himself is the Life, and it was not possible that Life should be holden of Death. Now, then, note the confirmation

of this stupendous fact. "He is risen; He is not here." We take it as a plain historical fact, which the extremest scepticism has never ventured to deny, that the grave of Christ was empty. The trumped-up story of the guards sufficiently shews that. When the belief of a resurrection began to be spread abroad, what would have been easier for Pharisees and rulers than to have gone to the sepulchre and rolled back the stone, and said, "Look there! there is your risen Man, lying mouldering, like all the rest of us"! They did not do it. Why? Because the grave was empty. Where was the body? They had it not, else they would have been glad to produce it. Now note the way in which the announcement of this tremendous fact was received. With blank bewilderment and terror on the part of these women, followed by incredulity on the part of the apostles and of the other disciples. These things are on the surface of the narrative; and very important they are. They plainly tell us that the first hearers did not believe the testimony which they call upon us to believe. And that being the state of mind of the early disciples on the Resurrection day, what becomes of the modern theory, which seeks to explain the fact of the early belief in the Resurrection by saying, "Oh, they had worked themselves into such a fever of expectation that Jesus Christ would rise from the dead that the wish was father to the thought, and they said He did because they expected He would"?

**IV. The summons to grateful contemplation.** "Behold the place where they laid Him." To these women the call was simply one to come and see what would confirm the witness. But we may, perhaps, permissibly turn it to a wider purpose, and say that it summons us all to thankful, lowly, believing, glad contemplation of that empty grave as the basis of all our hopes. Look upon it and upon the Resurrection which it confirms to us as an historical fact. It sets the seal of the Divine approval on Christ's work, and declares the Divinity of His person and the all-sufficiency of His mighty sacrifice. "Behold the place where they laid Him," and, looking upon it, let us think of that Resurrection as a prophecy in its bearing upon us and upon all the dear ones that have trod the common road into the great darkness. Christ has died, therefore they live; Christ lives, therefore we shall never die. "Behold the place where they laid Him," and in the empty grave read the mystery of the Resurrection as the pattern and the symbol of our higher life—that, "like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Oh to partake more and more of that power of His resurrection!—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

*Ver. 7. The message of the Resurrection.* The text, 'tis the first joyful tidings that came to the Church of God of our Saviour's Resurrection, the first blessed news of Christ's triumphant victory over death and the grave, and thereby of His restoring of us to life and immortality. This day Satan and the powers of hell, all the enemies of our salvation, were vanquished and subdued by Christ's Resurrection; the hold and fortress of death, the grave, was spoiled and ransacked, the gates and bars of hell broken in pieces. Our Samson hath taken the gates of the Philistines on His shoulders, and carried them away. Surely this is a day of joyful tidings. Let it be told to the King's household, published in the Church of God. Say unto Zion, "Behold, thy God reigneth": He hath triumphed gloriously; He hath led captivity captive; the horse and the rider, that pale horse, and Death riding on him, hath He slain in the battle (*Rev. vi. 8*).

**I. The despatch of this message,** and that seems very hasty and somewhat abrupt: it begins here with a word of diversion—"But." Why so? Were they in the wrong way? or in an unwarrantable employment? Just now, in the former verse, he bids them come and see the place, behold the sepulchre where

the Lord was laid, and from whence He was risen. Why doth he now presently remove them from it, not let them stay and take their fill of that joyful vision? 'Tis said of Hilarion he went once to Jerusalem to see those monuments of Christ's death and passion; but he went no more, he made no practice of it, placed no piety in it. So here the angel allows them a sight of the sepulchre to confirm their faith; but withal he dismisses them presently, suffers them not to fix their devotion upon it. Besides this reason, the angel is thus quick and speedy in his diversion, to teach us that even the spiritual delights of contemplation must give way to religious and pious actions. Their piety in meditating on His Resurrection must give way to their charity in imparting it to others. He is the best servant, not that delights to stand in his master's presence, but that carefully minds and diligently goes about his master's business. For the despatch of this message here are two things considerable. 1. From whom it comes. The first news of Christ's Resurrection is sent by an angel. (1) It becomes the excellency of this great work of Christ's Resurrection to be attended and published by the ministry of angels. (2) Fit it was an angel should first publish it, a heavenly messenger, as being a matter supernatural and heavenly, and of special revelation. All proclamations are first published at the court-gate, then sent abroad into the kingdom. This new revelation, 'tis first proclaimed at heaven's gates by an angel, and then sent abroad unto the sons of men. (3) Angels are made messengers and publishers of these tidings, and they gladly undertake it. See now there is a sweet communion and intercourse 'twixt them and us. It shews us the virtue and power of that great atonement of Christ's death and bloodshed; it hath made up the breach and alienation 'twixt us and the angels. They were all partakers in God's quarrel; and therefore the Scripture presents them in martial and military and warlike appearances, tells us of armies and hosts of angels. When soldiers and martial men proclaim peace and good-will, there is peace indeed. This office of love the angel performs, 'tis the fruit of Christ's mediation, the merit of His death, the purchase of His passion. 2. By whom the angel conveys this message; they are the women that repaired to the sepulchre. Reason would conceit that some other messengers should have been employed than these poor, weak women. But God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts are. (1) God purposely makes choice of such instruments in this great and weighty service. In the whole carriage and economy of the gospel God observes a mixture of much spiritual power and glory, with much outward baseness and meanness. (2) The tidings of His Resurrection are conveyed into the world by weak women. "Kings and princes," saith Chrysostom, "make known their minds to inferior people by their great officers and ministers of state: God, He employs poor, feeble, contemptible men to declare His will to the potentates of the world." (3) But yet there is some congruity that God observes in the choice of these messengers. These good women, they stood to it and clave to Christ when the apostles all of them fled and forsook Him; they assisted His Cross when the others hid themselves (Mark xv. 40); they watched His burial, repaired early and weeping to the sepulchre; they were forwardest in attending His passion; and so they are first made acquainted with His Resurrection.

II. **The persons to whom these tidings are directed.**—"Tell His disciples and Peter." 1. Here is a general direction to His disciples. (1) Why is not the message directed to Pilate and Herod, to Annas, and Caiaphas, and the priests, that condemned Him and compassed His death? It might have been a mighty conviction to them. No; 'tis purposely hid from them to punish their infidelity and former obstinacy. They had heard Him preach in His lifetime; now, should He appear from the dead, they would not believe Him. (2) Why not to the common people, that sinned out of ignorance? No; this manifestation of His Resurrection was not



made promiscuously to all, purposely to prepare a way to faith and believing. The great honour that Christianity doth to God is to embrace His truth upon belief. (3) This message and tidings of Christ's Resurrection is directed to His disciples. (a) They were the only visible body of Christians—to teach us, to whom the benefit of Christ's Resurrection belongeth; 'tis to the Church, 'tis limited and confined only to believers. (b) The faith of the disciples was now in a great weakness; they had almost given over all belief that Jesus was the Messiah (Luke xxiv. 21). Our faith, not only when 'tis *in robore*, in its full strength and vivacity, but when 'tis *in vulnere*, wounded and weakened and overwhelmed with temptations, is accepted of Him. (c) These disciples were at this time full of sadness and sorrow for the loss of their Master. Such mourners are blessed mourners; they shall be comforted. They that can lament for His passion, they shall be partakers of the joy and comfort of His Resurrection. 2. To acquaint Peter with these good tidings an express message is directed to him. (1) Peter had fallen most foully—denied, forsworn, his Master with curses and execrations. Oh, 'twas a great sin of the first magnitude! And yet to such and so vile a sinner are these tidings directed. It shews the virtue of the gospel of Christ's death and Resurrection; the greatest sinners, the most heinous offenders, may get good by it. (2) Peter's faith and graces have received a very great bruise and maim by his fall: his conscience is deeply wounded. He is like one fallen from a high place, exceedingly bruised, and lies for dead. Such a one must be caught up in our arms, more carefully tended. (3) Peter is now overwhelmed with sorrow for his heinous sin: he wept bitterly, no doubt abhorred himself in dust and ashes. And to extraordinary mourners God graciously directs extraordinary and special and more personal comforts. (4) Peter by his great fall in denying of Christ hath incurred a great and an infamous scandal, given a great offence to the whole Church of God. This personal message to him shall not only comfort his conscience, but cure his credit too. It plainly signifies he must not be cast off, but be dealt mercifully withal, and accounted as a brother. Nay, it restores him not only to his discipleship, but to his office of an apostle. The tidings are sent to him under the name of Peter, his apostolical name. (5) From this personal message to Peter we may briefly collect these three corollaries: (a) As loving parents are most tender of their weakest children, so is Christ to the feeble Christians, sorrowful, heavy-hearted Christians; His bowels of compassion yearn most towards them. (b) The angel pities Peter, and hath care and compassion on him. Peter's tears were the wine of angels; they were a banquet in heaven. (c) In conformity to Christ, in imitation of His angel, it must be our duty to practise the charge given to these messengers; have a care of Peter, of a sorrowful, contrite, broken-hearted Christian.

III. **The sum of the message, the news to be imparted.** "He goes before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him." 1. Here is an intimation of Christ's Resurrection. The angel is careful to confirm that truth to them. Indeed, 'tis the main capital truth of Christian religion—the sum and pith and kernel of the gospel. It strengthens our faith in other saving truths. (1) It confirms us in the truth of His Divinity (Rom. i. 4; Ps. xvi. 10). (2) It confirms to us the benefit of His death and passion. Had He died only, death had overcome Him; now He is risen, He hath overcome death. (3) This intimation is the strongest means to revive and comfort them. Faith, 'tis like the flower called heliotropium: when the sun sets, it fades and closes; when the sun rises and returns, it blows out and flourishes. 2. Here is a prediction that must evidence the truth of His Resurrection. "He goes before you into Galilee." (1) Here is an act of local motion. Christ's body now, after His Resurrection, 'tis a glorified body, and yet within the compass and condition of a true natural body, to be transferred by motion from one place to another. (a) After His

Resurrection 'twas a finite body: "He is risen; He is not here." When it was in one place, it was not in another. (b) It was a sensible body (Luke xxiv. 39). (c) It was organical: we read of His hands, feet, side. It had all the parts and members of a human body, in a just proportion and situation, the fit proportions of a human body. (2) Here is an act of prevention: "He goes before you." Early and speedily He hastens to Galilee, to visit and comfort them. 'Tis the gracious course of God's preventing goodness; He is forward to relieve and comfort His Church. All delays are tedious to Him. Nay, see the impatience of His love to His poor disciples: He appoints them Galilee; but He cannot withhold Himself so long from them—He appears to them sooner. (a) To Mary in the garden. (b) To the women in the way as they are going to Jerusalem. (c) To the two disciples as they are going to Emmaus. (d) To the apostles ere they stirred one foot out of the city. This is the speediness of His mercy (Isa. lxxv. 24). He is still better than His promise. (3) Here is the designation of the place: "Galilee." Why to so remote a place? (a) As 'tis said of Peter's sinking, 'twas not *pedes*, but *fides*; not his feet, but his faith failed him,—so Christ here requires them not to exercise their feet, but their faith. He would have them begin with faith, and then they shall end in sight. (b) He sends them so far the more to quicken and inflame their desires and longings to see Him. If He comes sooner to them, 'tis to comfort them; if He stays longer, 'tis to quicken and enliven their desires towards Him. (4) In particular Galilee is the place appointed. (a) 'Twas *locus tutus*: He graciously provides for His disciples' safety; He calls them out of Jerusalem, the place of persecution—makes them withdraw themselves from that bloody generation, where they were beset with dangers—leads them into a place of safety, where with greater freedom they might converse with Him. (b) 'Twas *locus familiaris*, a place where He had usually conversed with them; 'twas the place of His abode—He was called a Galilean. Purposely Christ chooses all the circumstances that might help forward their faith. In Galilee they had often enjoyed His presence; His appearing there would more fully affect them. (c) 'Twas *locus discipulorum plenus*; it was a place wherein Christ had most of His disciples. His preaching had nothing the success at Jerusalem that it had in Galilee. In Galilee He was seen of five hundred brethren at once. Here is the place that Christ delights to visit and frequent, where He hath the fullest churches, the greatest communion of saints and believers. (d) 'Tis *locus typicus*. Christ calls them from Jewry to Galilee; it casts the shadow of a type and prefiguration; it represents to us the passage and remove of Christ and His gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles. Before in His lifetime He confined His own presence and preaching to the nation of the Jews, and forbade His apostles to preach unto the Gentiles; but His Resurrection brake down the wall of separation; now their commission is enlarged, "Go, teach all nations." Bishop Brownrigg.

### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *The quest of faith.*—  
1. Faith seeks after life in the very sepulchre of Christ, and it will find even more than it seeks, because it seeks it as it ought, and out of a principle of obedience. 2. A solid and substantial devotion is always regular, does everything in its proper time, and is very far from neglecting what

is commanded for that which is not. 3. The Spirit of God, which guides these holy women, permits them not to dispense with the observance even of a dying law, that so they may perform a service to Christ which could be deferred but a very little while.—*P. Quesnel.*

*The earnestness of the women.*—It is

no wonder if we find the women here more earnest than the apostles in their grief and in regard to the death, the burial, and the embalming of the Lord's body. The woman is the first in the expression of her grief, for she was the first in hastening to the Fall; she goes before to the tomb who was the precursor to corruption; she brings the tidings of the Resurrection who had been the herald of death; she who had conveyed to the man the message of so dreadful a destruction herself conveys to men the sounds of a great salvation; that the loss which she occasioned by her suggestion to unbelief she might now compensate for by the tidings of faith (Gen. iii. 6, 12; 1 Tim. ii. 14, 15).—*Pet. Chrysologus.*

*Apparent discrepancies in the narratives.*—To harmonise the accounts a certain effort is necessary, because they tell of interviews with men and women who had to pass through all the vicissitudes of despair, suspense, rapturous incredulity, and faith. Each of them contributes a portion of the tale. From St. John we learn that Mary Magdalene came early to the sepulchre, from St. Matthew that others were with her, from St. Mark that these women, dissatisfied with the unskilful ministrations of men whose rank knew nothing of such functions, had brought sweet spices to anoint Him who was about to claim their adoration; St. John tells how Mary, seeing the empty sepulchre, ran to tell Peter and John of its desecration; the others, that in her absence an angel told the glad tidings to the women; St. Mark, that Mary was the first to whom Jesus Himself appeared. And thenceforth the narrative more easily falls into its place. This confusion, however perplexing to thoughtless readers, is inevitable in the independent histories of such events, derived from the various parties who delighted to remember each what had befallen himself.—*Dean Chadwick.*

Ver. 2. *The first day of the new creation.*—Surely we Christians may

see the reason of our keeping this day far more than any other day, inasmuch as it is the first of all days, the first day of the old creation, and the first day of the new in Christ, as on this day Christ rose from the grave. On this day, the first day in the beginning, the light was created. On this day, the first of days, Christ, the True Light, the Sun of Righteousness, rose from the grave. On this day the Holy Spirit came down, the true illumination, to fill the new creation with the light of God. This day, therefore, is beyond all days the day of our Maker, the day of our Redeemer, the day of our Sanctifier (Ps. cxviii. 21-25.)

*The journey of the women.*—A journey of—1. Love. 2. Provident care. 3. Hope. 4. Joy. 5. Life.

Ver. 3. *“Who shall roll us away the stone?”*—This question is applicable to—1. Those who are seeking Divine guidance and direction. To be involved in circumstances of doubt and perplexity respecting some path is no evidence of the want of the Divine favour. God sometimes keeps His children in the dark to secure their safety (Isa. l. 10). 2. To the subjects of anxious care through poverty and affliction. “Stand still, and see the salvation of God.” 3. To the persecuted and tempted believer. God will strengthen thee in thy weakness, and nerve thee for thy duty. 4. The hour of death. The eye of sense sees only the western horizon, and says, “The sun is going down.” The eye of faith turns to the glowing east, and sees the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in His wings.

*Obstacles in the Christian's path.*—Many of the obstacles in the life of the Christian, when they are first sighted ahead and when they are seen from a distance, appear to be invincible, insurmountable—barriers never to be overstepped or moved out of the way. The fact is, they are looked at only as to themselves and their own great size, and for the time there are not taken into account the weapons which



may be brought to bear against them and for their removal. In themselves, and as they stand before us, they are certainly formidable and fear-inspiring. Any mountain in the Alpine range is certainly of itself rather a startling and somewhat real obstacle; but it only requires, that one should pass over it into the fertile fields beyond, a stout heart, and a good physical frame, and abundance of "stay" and resolution, and plenty of time. A flood of water or an army of men is, either of them, fear-inspiring under certain circumstances; but the one, be it remembered, is made up of single drops, and the other of single units; and either the one or the other may be very easily restrained or destroyed.—*W. M. Arthur.*

Ver. 4. *The stone rolled away.*—

**I. To let Christ out of the grave.**—

1. To express the Divine acceptance of the work of Christ. 2. To do homage to the person of Christ. 3. To acknowledge the grandeur of the occasion. 4. To shew the futility of the mightiest human opposition. 5. To reveal the sympathy of the holy universe with the plan of salvation.

**II. To let Christians into the grave.**

—1. To convince them of the reality of the Resurrection. 2. To comfort them with the fact of the Resurrection. 3. To impress them with the power of the Resurrection. 4. To qualify them for the announcement of the Resurrection. 5. To assure them of their own resurrection.—*B. D. Johns.*

Ver. 5. *The tomb of a wealthy Jew,* even when hewn from the solid rock, was a large and ample structure. It commonly consisted of at least two parts: (1) an antechamber, which often took the form of a long vestibule or corridor; and (2) the mortuary chamber itself, in which the body or bodies were laid. Joseph's tomb seems to have been of this type. When the women looked up as they drew near, they saw at once that the rocky slab which closed the corridor on the outer side

had been removed from its place. Filled with amazement, they seem to have paused for a while; and then, while Mary of Magdala ran off to summon Peter and John (John xx. 2), the other women gathered courage to climb up to the vestibule and enter it. And here a still more amazing spectacle met their view. They saw—in the mortuary chamber, I suppose, or at the entrance into it—a youth sitting on the right hand, clothed in a long white stole, *i.e.* a talar, "which indicated a heavenly being, none other wearing such a vestment." They would know him for an angel by his garb and by his youth, angels being assumed never to lose the bloom and beauty of youth. "And they were affrighted," or rather amazed, the word denoting the extreme mental perturbation which a supernatural presence naturally inspires in those who are compassed with "this muddy vesture of decay." And what wonder that amazement, a solemn awe, should seize them, when, in the chamber of death, they saw the very type of immortal life! An angel in a tomb should teach us at least, if it did not teach them, that death is not the end, but a new beginning.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

Ver. 6. *The empty grave.*—1. A sure

and undeniable proof of Christ's Deity. 2. A full security that He is alive, to die no more. 3. An awful view of the evil nature of sin. 4. The insufficiency and uselessness of all our own righteousness in the matter of our justification before God. 5. In the grave of Christ we may see the curse of the broken law buried, and the wrath of God finally and effectually appeased in relation to every one who enjoys an interest in a risen and glorified Redeemer. 6. Here we may see death itself lie buried, so that none of the followers of Christ have any reason to be afraid of that last enemy.—*J. Young.*

"*He is not here.*"—1. Not in the grave, for He is risen from the dead. 2. Not in the garden, for He goes

forth into all the world. 3. Not here on earth, for He is entered into His Divine glory.

*Where Christ is not.*—There is but one place, only one, in which Christ is not to be found—His grave. He is not there; He arose and left it, and has never returned thither. If, then, that be the only place where He is not, He must be found by you, if you seek Him everywhere else, and everywhere only to bless you and do you good. “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” And yet, though emptied of Christ, that grave is full of consolation. His not being there tells us that He is Emmanuel, “God with us”—that His sacrifice is accepted, and that we are saved.

*“The place where they laid Him.”*—With most tombs the interest consists in the fact that all that is mortal of the saint or the hero or the near relative rests beneath the stone or the sod on which we gaze. Of our Lord’s sepulchre the real interest is that He no longer tenants it. It is not as the place in which He lies; it is not even chiefly as the place wherein He lay; it is as the place from which He rose that the tomb of Jesus speaks to faith. —*Canon Liddon.*

*The empty tomb of Jesus* recalls an event which is as well attested as any in history; it is so attested as to put the idea of what is called illusion out of the question. The main purpose, the first duty, of the apostolic ministry was to witness to the fact that Christ had risen. The apostles did not teach the Resurrection as a revealed truth, as they taught, for example, the doctrine of justification; they taught the Resurrection as a fact of experience, a fact of which they themselves had had experience. And this is why the different Evangelists did not report the same appearances of our Risen Lord. Each one reports that which he himself witnessed, or that which was witnessed by an eye-witness on whose authority he writes. Put the various attestations together, and the evidence

is irresistible. That which these witnesses attest must be true, unless they have conspired to deceive us, or are themselves deceived. The idea that they are deceiving us cannot be entertained by any man who understands human character; the idea that they were themselves deceived is inconsistent with the character of the witness which they give.—*Ibid.*

*The empty tomb an incitement to Christian endeavour.*—And why? Because of all effective endeavour hope must be a main ingredient, and hope nowhere so learns successfully to resist the pressure and shock of disappointment, and to reach forward with confidence into an unexplored future, as at the empty tomb of Jesus. Had He been crucified without rising from the dead, hope in the eventual triumph of truth and goodness must perforce have died away from the hearts of men; but as it is the Resurrection is a warrant that if the heaviness of spiritual discouragement should endure for a night, the joy of spiritual success, patiently awaited, cometh in the morning. So it is that those who while endeavouring to live the new life of Christ are fighting a hard battle against untoward circumstances, against strong insurgent passions, against deeply rooted and perhaps very evil habits, against some fatal weakness or warp of the will. Fail they must, if they essay to fight that battle in their own natural strength; but they can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth them, and the Christ that strengtheneth them is not only the teacher Christ, the example Christ, the perfect sacrifice for sin, He is also the Risen Christ, risen for their justification, and to this end making them a free present of His Resurrection strength. As such a soul in moments of deep discouragement comes in thought to see the place where the Lord lay once, but where He lies no more, it learns to understand its share in His great victory, and to expect with confidence that He will take it out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay,

and will set its feet upon a rock, and will order its goings. And so, too, with enterprises undertaken for the good of others—enterprises which seem to be stricken with the note of failure, which fail over and over again, which we are tempted to give up as a bad business. Do not give up that enterprise, be it what it may, if you can dare to offer it, if you have offered it, to God as intended to promote His glory and the good of your fellow-men—do not give it up. There was darkness over the whole world on the day of Calvary—darkness which lately portended, though it necessarily preceded, the brightness of the Resurrection morning. Your enterprise will have its Easter, if you will only have the patience and the grace to wait.—*Canon Liddon.*

Ver. 7. *The message to Peter.*—Whence happened it that to Peter, guilty, fallen Peter, is vouchsafed not only a common interest with his brethren in the angelic tidings, but a separate and individual communication?

I. **Because he had greatly offended against his Lord and Master.**—The Good Shepherd went, as it were, into the wilderness to recover him to the way of life and salvation. And what message so likely to effect the purposes of infinite love, or to animate the apostle's hopes, as the assurance that Christ had gotten Himself the victory over death, had triumphed gloriously over the wide dominion of the grave, and proved Himself to be the Son of God with power by the Resurrection from the dead? He was thus taught that the sincerity and bitterness of repentance which he had felt were not in vain; but that the same compassion which had awakened in his mind a salutary sense of his guilt still waited to pardon, to embrace, to restore him.

II. **Because he was a penitent transgressor.**—"The remembrance of his sin was grievous unto him, the burden of it was intolerable," Shame

and remorse had wrung his heart with anguish, which could bear no other witness than the eye of Heaven: "He went out and wept bitterly." Happy the tears which Peter shed in the seed-time of his sorrow! and great the measure of his joy when the reaping of the harvest came!

III. **In order that he might be invigorated for future duty.**—"When thou art converted," said our Lord, "strengthen thy brethren." The infant Church was in some degree committed to his especial care; and therefore an express revelation of his Master's triumph over death was vouchsafed, that he might bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, had begotten him again to a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. His faith was to be confirmed by the tidings of that wondrous event. His holy boldness in the great gospel cause was to be aroused by this pledge of his Saviour's power and truth. And thus it actually happened. He continued sound in the faith, unshaken in danger, unmoved in tribulation, and at length laid down his life for his Master, with whom he now reigns in glory everlasting, bearing on his brow the bright diadem of Christian martyrdom. 1. The preachers of the gospel may learn from the angel's message what should be the pattern of their own ministrations. We should guide the undutiful son to the tender Father whom he has left; and when he comes to himself, when he arises to seek salvation, we should shew how his peace has been made, and how he may partake the mercies of that amnesty which the trumpet of the gospel jubilee proclaims to all. 2. The spiritual application of this subject will also teach us the duty of preparing to meet our Risen Saviour in the world of glory. He hath first departed to prepare the way for us.—*R. P. Buddicom.*

*A forgotten promise.*—In common with the apostles they had forgotten



His gracious promise, as in our hours of darkness we too commonly forget the words which should inspire trust and hope: "But after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee" (Mark xiv. 28: see also, for the pastoral figure, the previous verse),—go before you as a shepherd who collects and leads his scattered sheep. It may be doubted whether we have any of us laid such stress on this promise as it deserves, or as the Gospels lay on it, and on the means taken to secure its fulfilment—whether we have not been almost as forgetful of it, and with less excuse, as the apostles themselves. What it really meant was, that before they returned from the feast to their Galilean homes Jesus would be there, going before them and sheaving the way. Had they remembered the promise and acted on it, how much suffering they might have been spared! If, instead of mourning and weeping in Jerusalem, they had set out for Galilee, assured that He would there manifest Himself to them and renew His broken intercourse with them, the days lost in grief might have been bright with hope and action.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

*Galilee, the place of meeting.*—Galilee was the place where He had spent most of His time on earth, where His first miracle had been wrought, and where His apostles had been called to follow Him. It was the locality where He Himself had been brought up, and also the native place of the dearest of His disciples—Peter, James, and John. These had followed Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and there had witnessed many sad and solemnising scenes—scenes fitted to trouble, to agitate, and to overwhelm. Remembering all this, we cannot help seeing that there was great tenderness and love on the part of the Redeemer in asking them to meet Him after His Resurrection,—not at Jerusalem, where He had been faithlessly betrayed by one of the twelve; not at Gethsemane, the scene of His indescribable agony; not at Calvary, where

He had poured out His soul even unto death; but in Galilee—remote and secluded Galilee—inseparably associated with the memory of their earliest days, and with their first impressions of the riches of the Saviour's grace.

*A testing lesson in faith.*—We believe on evidence, but in difficult things we want the greatest possible amount of evidence. Faith is awakened in us, but faith needs to be trained and confirmed by some hard act of faith. The disciples heard of the Resurrection, but heard it as an idle tale. Then He appeared to them, and they were affrighted, supposing they had seen a spirit. They behold His hands and feet; they handle Him, and find that He has flesh and bones, and is not a ghostly apparition. But there may yet be room for doubt; it may be an illusion or contagion of credulity that has crept into their wearied and excited minds. And so they are led away from the scene of the event to Galilee, a three days' journey. Thus a twofold end is gained: fresh confirmation, and a stern, testing lesson in faith. "Is it, after all," we can imagine them saying, "worth the while to make the journey to Galilee? Can He who died on the Cross, whose feet were pierced with nails, journey thither? That He should appear *here* is possible; we have heard the like before: but will He appear in Galilee?" So their minds may have acted; and as they made the journey every step and every hour must have tended to throw them out of their belief and hope. For there is nothing that so tests our faith in an event difficult of belief as to get out of the atmosphere of it. The wonder lessens as we go away from it. When remote from it, the mind settles back into the old habit of belief, and into its every-day habit. And nothing so aids this tendency as a journey. Its weariness takes away the edge of interest; the wider view of the world draws us back to the steady order of the world and the great facts of nature. In a journey

we believe in what we see; we are engrossed in the changing scene. Travel helps the mind, but it is not favourable to the finer exercises of the spirit. This journey to Galilee was made by the disciples in resistance of all these influences. Doubtless the energy of their faith sank with weariness, and their practical minds fell under the spell of the old, every-day world. Doubtless they often said to one another, "Has not our life these three years been a mistake? Have we not left a real and rational life in the world for the vagaries of an enthusiast?" This is a temptation that we all undergo,—the temptation to let go the ideals of life that have been revealed to us—purity, honour, unselfishness, self-denial, truth, spirituality—and sink back into the selfish, striving world that is all about us, clamouring at every door of our nature for entrance. But if this experience of the disciples was a trial of their faith, it also strengthened it. For faith is not hurt by doubt until it yields to it. The very weakness and faltering of faith may be turned into strength by pressing on in its path, fighting doubt, and resisting the ap-

peals of the world. This journey of simple trust and stout adherence to hope was a fine preparation for harder experiences soon to follow. There would come times when not merely the faltering of their own hearts was against them, but all the powers of the world—times when their only refuge would be their faith in the Risen and Ascended Lord. Then the memory of this experience, crowned by actual sight of their Master, would come to their rescue.—*T. T. Munger, D.D.*

Ver. 8. "*They were afraid.*"—Why? Certainly not, as Petter supposes, "from the apprehension of some hurt or danger which might befall them by or upon the apparition of the angel to them." Neither is it natural to think of any far-seeing solicitude lest the news should get wind and reach the ears of the members of the Sanhedrin, so as to arouse to persecution. Dr. Edward Wells comes nearer nature. "For," says he, "they were afraid to stay, and not to hasten all they could to the apostles." They were in a tumult of commotion, and could not pause by the way to speak to any.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—18.

(PARALLELS: MATT. xxviii. 9-20; LUKE xxiv. 13-43; JOHN xx. 11-29.)

*Christ's first appearance after His Resurrection.*—I. **Why did He appear first to a woman?**—1. To shew that God is no respecter of persons (Rom. ii. 11)—that is, that in the bestowing of spiritual graces or privileges God does not regard the outward quality or condition of the persons upon whom He bestows them, but He doth freely and indifferently bestow such graces and privileges upon persons of all sorts and conditions—upon women as well as men, poor as well as rich, etc. 2. To shew that the fruit and benefit of His resurrection, and consequently of His death and passion, belong to women as well as to men.

II. **Why did He appear first to this woman in particular?**—1. Because she shewed most love to Christ, and was most forward and diligent in seeking after Him. (1) She is first named; yea, she alone (John xx. 1). (2) She continued longest seeking. (3) She sought Him with tears. 2. To comfort her against her former miserable and afflicted condition.

**Lessons.**—1. Christ is most ready and forward to reveal and manifest Himself and His comfortable presence to such as truly and earnestly love Him, and are most forward to shew and express their love towards Him. 2. Christ hath a great care of such of His saints and servants as have been in great misery and distress, that they may not want comfort and encouragement afterward.

3. Such as have received great mercies and favours from God, if they be thankful to Him and make good use of those favours, shall have more added unto them. 4. The more any have tasted of the mercy of God, the more they will love God and Christ, and the more forward they will be to shew their love by its fruits.—*G. Petter.*

*Christ's appearance to two disciples.*—Had St. Luke's Gospel never been written, or contained no reference to this incident, we might have indulged in a variety of conjectures and speculations regarding it. "Who were these two disciples?" we might have asked; "and where were they going? On what day, and what time of day? What are we to understand by the expression 'in another form'?" Did Christ merely shew Himself to them? or did He converse with them? and if so, on what subjects? If He appeared to them under a different form from that under which they had hitherto known Him, how did they recognise Him? What feelings and impressions did the incident leave upon their minds?" These and many other questions might have been suggested by St. Mark's brief account; but little or nothing satisfactory could have resulted from the inquiry. In this state of uncertainty, how gladly should we have welcomed the discovery of another and hitherto unknown portion of Scripture, containing the very information we were seeking—a narrative taken down from the lips of one of the two disciples, giving a full and particular account of the whole transaction—just such a narrative, in short, as we find in Luke xxiv. 13-35! Let us suppose that this narrative were now before us for the first time, and see what information may be obtained from it as to the particulars upon which we were in doubt.

1. *The meeting of the two disciples with their Risen Lord.* St. Mark only states that after Jesus had first appeared to Mary Magdalene, who "went and told them that had been with Him" (*i.e.* the general body of disciples in Jerusalem), but failed to convince them—after that He appeared in another form unto two" of those who had heard Mary's story and believed it not. We might almost infer from this that the appearances both took place on Easter Day itself; and St. Luke confirms this (xxiv. 13). We also gather from his account that it was in the afternoon (ver. 29). The name of one of them—"Cleopas"—is mentioned incidentally (ver. 18); but no hint is given as to who the other was. All we know for certain is, that he was not one of the eleven apostles (ver. 33). To these two disciples, then, Jesus appeared, "as they walked and went into the country." Had we only St. Mark's statement, we might have supposed it was a walk of recreation, not of business (as Gen. xxiv. 63). What could be more natural than for persons in such a state of agitation and suspense to seek an opportunity of calm reflexion and discussion in a quiet country walk! We learn, however, from St. Luke that they were on their way to a certain place, several miles distant from Jerusalem (ver. 13), where they intended to lodge that night (ver. 29), though whether at an inn, or at the house of one of them, or at a friend's house we cannot determine. As they walked they talked; and their conversation could not but turn upon those recent and still passing events in which they were so deeply interested (ver. 14). Their hearts were full, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Their discourse was earnest and solemn, for it related to matters on the ultimate event of which the whole course and character of their future lives might turn. As they thus talked a Stranger came up and joined them. It was Jesus; yet they knew Him not (vers. 15, 16). They were not struck with blindness; they saw other objects, and saw them as they really were; they saw the person and features of Jesus Himself, but by some providential arrangement of which we can form no conception they were prevented from recognising



Him. Even His voice, with whose accents they must have been as familiar as a child with its parent's, failed to convey its wonted impressions to their ears. The same mysterious influence which had been exercised for a brief period over the senses of Mary Magdalene (John xx. 14-16) now took possession of them, and maintained its ascendancy throughout the lengthened conversation which ensued. First the two disciples related to the Stranger "the things which were come to pass there in those days" (vers. 18-24). When they had finished their statement, the Stranger Himself took up the discourse; and their share in the conversation consisted chiefly (we may suppose) in such inquiries and remarks as scholars are in the habit of addressing to their master, to elicit further explanation, and so forth. There was but one subject which at that time could be of the slightest interest to any of the party, viz. the accordance of all that had happened to Jesus with the prophetic announcements respecting the Messiah (vers. 25-27). On this subject He held His hearers in mute and rapt attention until towards evening they drew near their destination. All this time they had no idea who their Companion really was; but thinking Him a man like themselves, they begged Him to take up His quarters with them for the night. All three therefore turned in, and sat down to meat; and it was during this meal that the mist or veil was removed from their eyes, and they saw Him in His own proper form in which He had always appeared to them. Even the precise moment of the discovery is recorded by St. Luke (vers. 30, 31, 35); it was when He was in the act of breaking bread, and blessing it, and giving it to them, that they recognised Him who had so often before performed the same pious act in their presence. The recognition being complete, the purpose of this whole transaction was answered, and Jesus "vanished out of their sight."

II. *The feelings of the two disciples in the presence of their Risen Lord.*—"Did not our heart burn within us!" they exclaimed (ver. 32). The expression is a striking one, and seems to be as pregnant with meaning as their hearts were with feeling. It indicates the presence not of one but of many strong and stirring emotions within the breast, all too big for the confined space in which they were pent up. It reminds us of the psalmist's language (Ps. xxxix. 3), or of Jeremiah's (Jer. xx. 9). 1. The first feeling excited in their breasts was perhaps that of hope. They had had hope in Christ before (Luke xxiv. 21); but His condemnation and death had filled their minds with despondency. To look for the salvation of their nation to One who had not been able to save Himself would indeed have been to hope against hope. But the discourse of their Fellow-traveller rekindled the dying embers, and fanned them into a flame. Did not the Scriptures of the prophets expressly point to a suffering as well as a triumphant Messiah, and suffering in order to triumph? See Isa. liii. And as to His being alive again, as announced to the women by a vision of angels, why should they discredit it or be astonished at it? See Ps. xvi. 10. If we at this day are able to build up for ourselves "a good hope through grace" on the foundation of these and similar texts, we may imagine what it must have been to hear Jesus Himself "expounding in all the Scriptures the things concerning" His own sufferings and exaltation; we may well believe that while they listened the hearts of these two disciples beat high with hope—the hope of seeing their Lord again, triumphant over death and the grave, and of themselves sharing His triumph. We often hear it said, "What is life without hope?" but those who say it are thinking of some temporal advantage, some improvement in worldly condition, the hope of which cheers them under present difficulties and animates them to fresh exertion in the struggle of life. But what is life, when all its hopes are realised and all its objects attained, without the Christian hope? 2. Did not the hearts of the two disciples burn within them with love and gratitude while the unknown Object of that love

talked with them by the way and opened to them the Scriptures? And what should be more effectual to inflame love where it exists, or to kindle it in hearts as yet unconscious of it, than the contemplation of those events which were recalled to the minds of these men by the discourse of Jesus? The thought of Christ being "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities" is one with which we have been familiar from childhood, which may have weakened somewhat the effect it ought to have upon our minds. But whenever it is placed strongly and clearly before us, cold and dead must be that heart which does not respond to the appeal! Fools indeed must they be, and "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" and all that the Evangelists have recorded, who are not melted by the bare recital of all that the Son of God suffered in the flesh for us men and for our salvation! 3. Doubtless the predominant emotion was joy. The two disciples had set out on their journey in sorrow and heaviness. But as the Stranger proceeded to shew them from Scripture not only the probability but the certainty and necessity of their Lord's resurrection, their hearts were cheered and warmed with the prospect of beholding Him again, in accordance with His own most gracious promise (John xvi. 20-22). And if they had cause to rejoice, how much more have we! See Ps. cxviii. 24-29; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

Vers. 14-18. *The departing Saviour.*—I. Our departing Saviour's chidings (ver. 14).—It sounds somewhat harsh to hear that the gentle Jesus mingled rebukes with His parting words. But it was love itself that gave birth to these upbraidings. It was not that Jesus took pleasure in reproaching His disciples, or that He did not wish them every comfort and peace of mind; but it was just because their highest welfare was the chief desire of His heart that He thus admonished them. Faith is the great saving grace; and where that is wanting there is misery, darkness, and death. It was just because He loved them, and wished to have them take in and possess the true joys of faith, that He upbraided them with their unbelief. Every interest of their own, and of those who were afterward to believe through their word, was put into terrible jeopardy by the indulgence of such stubborn scepticism. And as the Saviour loved them, and loved the souls of men in general, He referred to it in His last interview, expressed again His dissatisfaction, and gave to them, and through them to all men, a last solemn warning against "an evil heart of unbelief." Nor can we plead that no such evil temper and hardness have in any way characterised us hitherto. Have we so believed the Resurrection of Christ as to take all its momentous implications home to our souls, and to have them living in our lives? Have we so believed it, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead," etc.? (Rom. vi. 4-6). Admitting that Christ is risen, have we then so risen with Him as to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God? (Col. iii. 1, 2). Conceding it as true that there is a blessed resurrection life for the virtuous and the good, have we really set ourselves to attain to that resurrection of the just? Yielding that Jesus is declared the Son of God with power, have we embraced Him with all our heart, and clung to Him as the only Saviour of our souls, and given ourselves to obey Him in all things as the Captain of our salvation?

II. Our departing Saviour's commands (vers. 15, 16).—Here is another grand testimony and manifestation of our Great Redeemer's love. It is assumed that there is a heaven and that there is a hell; but the desire of Jesus is that all men should escape the horrors of the one and secure the blessedness of the other. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). But there is only one way in which men can be saved (John iii. 36). The Saviour Himself here reannounces the same, and has made it firm and

unalterable for ever. But it is impossible for men to believe on the Son, or to turn themselves heartily to Him as their hope, without first having had Him preached unto them. This is now the grand commission of all Christ's disciples. The gospel calls men not only to be saved themselves, but to be agents and messengers in carrying the same salvation to others. No Christian is exempt from its binding obligation, and no Christian is excluded from the high privilege and honour of taking part in it, according to his sphere and measure. There is indeed a line of discrimination to be observed between Christians in general and those who are the chosen and appointed ministers of the Church; but the election of some to officiate more directly for the rest assumes that there is a common office of this sort inhering in the whole body and in all its members in common. That office it is the business of every individual to exercise, if not in his own person, yet in and through others, by his vote, concurrence, and aid. But the mere preaching and hearing of the truth is not all. Something more is necessary in order to full profit in Divine grace. As Christ commands the preaching of the gospel to every one, so He also at the same time appoints and ordains the holy sacrament of baptism to be received by every one, as a test of his obedience to the truth, and as a further means of imparting His Holy Spirit. Faith without obedience is nothing, and salvation is promised only to him "that believeth and is baptised." We must remember, also, that saving faith is not a product of our reason and will. "It is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8). It is a thing wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. And the instrument of the Holy Ghost is the Word and sacraments. God has appointed baptism as well as preaching; and the promise of salvation rests on one as upon the other. Hence it is written: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5). And again: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. iii. 5). And, again, that "the ark wherein eight souls were saved by water" was a "like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us," which is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. iii. 20, 21). Hence the farewell charge of the loving Jesus is, that we carry this sacrament wheresoever we carry the gospel itself; and that, equally with our preaching of His truth to every creature, it is our duty to offer baptism to every creature, and to demand of all men obedience to the one as we require faith in the other, as the Divine conditions on which alone we are authorised to promise salvation to them that hear us.

**III. Our departing Saviour's promises** (vers. 17, 18).—These are grand and startling announcements. Scepticism has often pointed to them, and challenged Christians to attest their faith accordingly. Whether such miracles occur now or not, if they ever were actually wrought by Christians, then the promise has been fulfilled, and the taunt of infidelity falls to the ground. Turning back, then, to those trying times when Christianity went forth in a few humble fishermen and tent-makers, to grapple with the hoary systems which then held empire over the world, we are also abundantly certified that in no instance did these assurances fail (Heb. ii. 4). Were they to be able to cast out demons? (Acts xvi. 16, 24, xix. 11, 12). And many demons of pride, covetousness, uncleanness, drunkenness, gluttony, ambition, and demons of lust, hatred, moroseness, and spirits of wickedness of innumerable sorts, did these same apostles expel by their preaching, turning men from their idols and corruptions to serve the Living and True God—thus both literally and spiritually fulfilling the blessed promise of the Master, that in His name they should "cast out devils." Were they to be able to speak in languages which they had never learned? (Acts ii. 5-11, x. 46). Were they to be able to take up poisonous



reptiles unharmed? (Acts xxviii. 1-6). Were they to be able to drink deadly draughts with impunity? Church history tells of a fatal potion prepared for the destruction of the Apostle John, which he drank, but was unhurt by the poisoned cup, which it was confidently counted would be his death. Were they to be able to heal the sick and the suffering? (Acts iii. 1-9, ix. 33-35, xiv. 8-11). And time would fail to tell the works of healing wonder which the disciples wrought in the name of Jesus, by prayer and the laying on of hands, in which the Master fulfilled His promise: "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." "They went forth, and preached the Word everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following." Nor was the promise or the fulfilment of it confined to them alone. It was not made to apostles simply, but "them that believe," and hence to Christians in general. Accordingly we find this miraculous power working in and by the Church for a hundred years after the Saviour's ascension. It is still outstanding, firm, and good; and always must hold good, as long as the gospel is preached, and men are found to believe it. The lack is not to be sought in the absence of necessity, but in the weakness and the infirmity of our faith. There were places, when Christ was on earth, at which He did not many mighty works, because of the unbelief of the people. Want of faith will always restrain and grieve away the gracious power of God. And instead of reasoning these precious promises into a state of superannuation, let us rather conclude that the Church's living confidence in her Lord has declined. Let us look for more, pray with more confidence, realise more thoroughly what our high calling is, and what an Almighty Saviour we have, and as God is true His promise will be verified now as well as in other ages.—*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*

Ver. 15. *What is Christian preaching?*—Our Lord believed in the work of the preacher, not only as one of the chief methods of disseminating the gospel, but as the chief method. By Him it was never undervalued as something secondary. He "went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching." When He sent forth the apostles He said, "As ye go, preach." After His Resurrection "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." And Paul rejoices that he "was ordained a preacher."

I. Realising the importance of this office, as we turn to study the great Model we find ourselves at first discouraged, because that which impresses us most strongly is **the dissimilarity between the discourses of Him who "spake as never man spake" and any which we may ever hope to produce.** 1. We must study and frame our sentences beforehand, and many times sit down afterward and wonder that so great a truth could be so poorly told. The most striking element in Christ's discourses is their marvellous spontaneity. His words were real lightning: they flashed. With us, and our perhaps necessary elaborate methods, they become too often only lightning on canvas—a streak of yellow paint. But even here, in this at first most discouraging attribute of our Lord's preaching, we may find for ourselves an idea and an ideal. The ideal Christian discourse will be that which in manner and spirit as nearly as possible resembles Christ's. With Him preaching was speaking. "He opened His mouth and spake." We cannot do this as He did it; and if the perpetuation of the Christian religion had depended upon this kind of Christian preaching, it would have died with the death of the apostles and their immediate successors. If the inspiration which they received was not indeed different in kind from that which falls on us to-day, it was so infinitely different in degree that the result is the same in either case. 2. And yet there is one method by which in its effect we may approximate the manner of Christ's preaching. And because of the difference between us and the apostles that

method is exactly the opposite of that which He suggested to them. What they, fresh from immediate personal contact with the Christ, were to do by "taking no thought," we can accomplish only by recognising in a very special sense the need of taking much thought. Thomas Guthrie began in Edinburgh a pastorate which lasted thirty years; and he determined from the beginning to preach extemporaneously, as Christ preached. But he realised that he had limitations which Christ and His apostles had not—that if he would accomplish this, it must be, not with less study than would be required for a written sermon, but more. He rose regularly at five in summer and six in winter, and for five days in the week devoted the first three hours of every morning to the preparation of his sermon. Thus for fifteen hours it was the single object of his thought. He wrote it and rewrote it, eliminating here and emphasising there, until when Sunday came he did not need to learn it; as our school-children say, "It had learned itself." Unconsciously he had absorbed it, and by reading it over once or twice on the morning of its delivery he went into the pulpit surcharged. The ideas leaped to his lips without conscious effort, in almost or quite the very language in which he had thought and written them out, with all the polish of a scholar and all the spontaneity of a speaker. He preached like Christ; and that which happened eighteen hundred years ago happened again, as it always will under similar circumstances: "The common people heard him gladly."

II. **What was the substance of Jesus' preaching?**—1. Our Lord's sermons were doctrinal, if we remember that *docere* means to teach. When He speaks, He speaks as though something were settled; and that is dogma, truth crystallised. The very name of His followers was that of disciples, learners. He had something to teach. His discourses were not "guesses at truth." There was nothing in them which would remind one of the debating society, where "everything is an open question." "Do you know," said the late Oliver Wendell Holmes, "I don't like to listen to these everlasting negations that some ministers deal out from the pulpit." 2. Christ's preaching was pictorial: He knew how to teach it. That was probably an overstatement when some one said of Him that "our Lord never preached a sermon in which He did not tell a story, because it is written that 'without a parable spake He not unto them.'" But there is no doubt that His style of address was essentially Oriental. Neither is there any doubt that this was one of the chief reasons why the throngs hung so breathlessly upon His words. His eye swept all heaven and earth for metaphors and parables and similes. We may mark the perils to be met with here by noting how deftly He avoided them. He never fondled an illustration, as one does a pretty babe, to call attention to itself. His illustrations illustrated. They were suggestive, not exhaustive. With Him a metaphor was only "a window into an argument." He never deliberately constructed ornamentation; but we must believe, with His sermons before us, that He did ornament construction. But even here we need a qualifying word. Though His teaching was illustrative, it was always teaching. His figures were not wax flowers, put on for adornment, simply adherent. They were inherent, they were the truth in blossom. 3. His preaching was persuasive: He knew why He taught it. There is no true Christian sermon ever preached which does not contain, directly or indirectly, this element of persuasion to a Christian life. It is this which differentiates it from other forms of literature, and makes it a Christian sermon. A drama is always pictorial, and sometimes instructive: a lyceum lecture is supposed to be both. But the distinctive mark of a Christian sermon is that it is a discourse aimed at the will, for the purpose of inducing or strengthening the Christian life. What Christ said of Himself was eminently true of His preaching: it was "a way" not stopping with itself,

but leading farther on. 4. In His teaching He was spiritual: He addressed the inner life. He not only had something to teach, and knew how to teach it, and why He taught it; He knew likewise to whom He taught it. His appeal was ever to the spiritual yearning which in greater or less degree is to be found in every soul. "I don't care whether it's Briggism or anti-Briggism," said a man at the close of a celebrated service in a New York church, as he ran up into the pulpit and grasped the hand of the clergyman; "but for God's sake help me; for I am a ruined soul." In every word He ever uttered Christ always had in mind that ruined soul, longing to be borne upward into an atmosphere of health. "I am come," He said, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."—*G. T. Dowling, D.D.*

Vers. 17, 18. *The signs of faith.*—When we remember such words as those which tell us that "he who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," how should it at once arrest our attention to hear, from the lips of Him who cannot deceive, an account of those very signs which shall mark out the possession of this invaluable gift!

I. **We seem to be reading we are evidently reading —of gifts and of powers which have long passed away from Christ's Church:** gifts and powers which never infallibly pointed out the true members of His spiritual body—for some had these who had little, if any, experience of the inward graces of Christ's Spirit—and which now, at all events, do not survive, to make any distinction, real or apparent, amongst the multitude of His professed disciples. It was one great object of Christ's revelation to draw up the veil which separated between the material and the spiritual, and to disclose to the eyes of men those great but unseen realities in the very midst of which they were blindly and unconsciously dwelling. This unseen world was of a twofold character. There was the world of God, and the world of the devil—the world of Divine agency, and the world of antagonist evil. With both of these every man upon earth was deeply concerned; and yet the nature, the very existence, of either could only be made known to him for certain by disclosures from God. Thus, on the one hand, the devil was permitted in that generation to manifest his operation upon men's souls by visible tokens of his presence in their bodies. On the other hand, that generation was blessed also with equally palpable proofs of the operation of God's Spirit. He enabled the tongue to utter languages which the understanding in many cases could not interpret; He made the word of a man powerful to heal diseases which had defied all the skill of physicians—to cast out from the convulsed and distorted body those evil spirits which had usurped it for their abode. But these visible and sensible proofs of the presence of God's Spirit were never designed, we may venture to say, to remain with the Church of Christ. The signs which were to follow them that believed—if in the first instance they were of a mixed character, partly gifts and partly graces, partly outward powers and partly spiritual virtues—were designed to become ere long wholly of the latter kind: the only powers with which Christ's people were ultimately to be endued in this life were such as are inseparable from the graces of love and knowledge and holiness—from the insensible but resistless influence of one who is proved by his life and spirit to have God with him and in him of a truth.

II. **Every one of these signs has a corresponding token in times when miracles are no more.**—Let us view by the light of other words of God each of the four particulars here enumerated in its application to our own days. 1. If Christ stood now in the midst of us and said, "These signs shall follow those amongst you that believe: in My name shall they cast out devils," should we not at once understand Him to declare, that, whatever be the peculiar sins to which we are



most often and powerfully tempted, whatever the snares by which the great enemy most easily prevails over us, in His name we must overcome them?—that, knowing as we all do our weaknesses, our faults, our past sinful acts, our present foolish and hurtful desires; knowing whether it be in the form of passion, or of selfishness, or of sensuality, or of sloth, that sin has most power over us; knowing by experience that in some one or in all of these forms it has great power over us, and recognising, as Christ teaches us to do, in all these things indications of his presence and his agency who like a roaring lion is ever going about seeking whom he may devour, we must cast him out in His name and strength?—that, if we really believe, we shall do so; that if we do it not, it is because we have no faith and therefore no life in us? 2. “They shall speak with new tongues.” The miraculous power which fulfilled this prediction has long passed away. But what was the miraculous gift of tongues—glorious as it was, and most convincing as an argument of the Divine origin of the gospel—when viewed in comparison with that grace which was so aptly signified by its exercise, and for so many ages has survived its withdrawal? If he who has hitherto found no response within, when he would fain have summoned his heart to awake and utter praise—who has knelt on his knees to pray, and found his very prayers dried up at their inmost source by the withering power of long indifference or unbelief—is now able to realise God’s being, to trust in Christ’s mediation, to enter in through that door into the heavenly courts of the Lord, to present there with a full heart his daily offering of confession and prayer and thanksgiving, to believe that he is heard, and to receive according to his need the supply of life and strength and comfort,—what is this but the gift of a new tongue, a sign which follows them that believe, and betokens an heir of salvation? 3. “They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.” In other words, this is one of the signs which attend Christ’s servants, that what is perilous to others is safe to them, that that is health to them which to others is but an occasion of falling. They live in an ensnaring world. Their own hearts are weak and treacherous. Their occupations in life are often perilous to the well-being of their souls. They hear evil maxims often avowed, corrupting principles more often insinuated. Their own duty sometimes requires them to read or to hear that of which they had been happy to have remained ignorant. Some friend, whom nature or choice had endeared to them most closely, seeks by argument or persuasion or ridicule to shake their steadfastness, and by his own example encourages them to sin. But what then? Greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world. To the pure all things are pure. The tempest which overthrows others but roots them more firmly. 4. “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” We have dwelt upon other signs of true faith: how it shews itself in fighting against our own sins—in bridling the tongue, and yet loosing it—in giving safety amidst danger, and stability amidst general defection. And now we are taught to remember how the same principle tends to make us useful in the world—useful in our own world, whatever that be, whether the world of youth or the world of men; how it enables us to help the weak, to warn the sinful, to comfort the weak-hearted, to establish the wavering, to bring back the wandering; how the consistent maintenance, in word and conduct, of that spirit of faith in Christ of which we are speaking, will, by God’s blessing, often without a word of direct exhortation, act upon others with a powerful influence, silently reproving, teaching, guiding, supporting our brethren, even when we are least conscious of any eye being upon us.—*Dean Vaughan.*

## OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 9. *Christ's appearance to Mary of Magdala.*—St. Mark reminds us that Mary had once been possessed by seven devils; and whatever else and more be included in demoniacal possession, we know that it must have perilously weakened brain and nerve. Is it not obvious, then, that, as we might have expected of Him, Jesus appeared first to Mary because she was in the most desperate need of Him? Wandering about the garden like one distraught, blinded with her tears, possessed with one idea—so possessed that even the angelic vision seems to have had no awe for her, and she fails to recognise the Lord she loved, till in familiar tones He cries, “Mary”—who does not see the extreme danger her susceptible and excitable nature was in? Insanity was not far off when she flung herself upon Him with the cry, “My Master,” and would have clasped His feet. How wholesome for her too and calming to have a commission confided to her, to be made useful, to be sent to the disciples with the message, “I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God!”—*S. Cox, D.D.*

“*First to Mary Magdalene.*”—To reconcile this representation with Matthew's (xxviii. 9), we must suppose—what is perfectly natural—that there was a variety of runnings to and fro. We may conceive the case in some such way as the following—without, however, imagining that it embodies the absolute historic truth: When the group of women saw the open tomb and the angels, Mary may instantly, in a kind of ecstatic bewilderment, have turned on her heels to run and carry word of the fact to the apostles. By-and-by the other women would follow. Ere long Peter and John would come running, and then return. Mary for a little season was alone, near the sepulchre, and Jesus revealed

Himself to her. By-and-by the other women rejoined her, and Jesus appeared to them all, as they were on their way to the apostles. There would be in all their bosoms not only interest, strung to the highest pitch, but ecstasy, and trepidation, and an impossibility of resting anywhere longer than a few moments at a time. See Greswell's *Forty-third Dissertation*.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Ver. 12. *Another form.*—By “another form” St. Mark seems to mean a different form to that in which Christ appeared to Mary, but may, and probably does, mean nothing more than a form other than that with which they had been familiar in the days of His humiliation—“a spiritual body,” and no longer “a natural body.” This conjecture is confirmed by the word rendered *manifested*, a different word to that rendered “appeared” in ver. 9. It implies that in His new form He was not necessarily visible, though He could render Himself visible where and to whom He would.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

Ver. 13. *The unbelief of the apostles.*—“Neither believed they them.” The original is stronger: *but not even them did they believe.* And yet it is said in Luke xxiv. 33, 34, that when they got into the midst of “the eleven and them that were with them,” they were met with the exclamation, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” This apparent contrariety demolishes at a stroke the theory of Hitzig, who supposes that Luke is the author of Mark xvi. 9-20. It also completely overturns the theory of those who imagine that the section, though not composed by Luke, was, by the hand of some other one, culled out of Luke. But there is no real contradiction nevertheless. The disciples of our Lord were in the midst of the inconsistencies of

a tumultuating and transition state of mind. All their hopes had been suddenly dashed. They had been utterly disappointed. And yet they could not bring themselves to believe that their late Beloved Lord had been an impostor. Had He not been uniformly and perfectly pure? Had He not been almost infinitely unselfish and noble? It could not be that He was a deceiver. And yet the unchallengeable fact stared them in the face, that, instead of throwing off His disguise and assuming His royal prerogatives, as they had anticipated, He had been seized, tried, condemned, and crucified like a slave! What could they make of the case? Mary Magdalene and other women had told them that the sepulchre was found by them open and illumined by the presence of angels. Peter and John had run to it, and found the report of the women true, in its main element at least. Then Mary had told them that the Lord actually appeared to her. They could not for a moment doubt her sincerity. But surely her imagination must have imposed on her! By-and-by, however, the Lord appeared to Peter also, and he reported the fact to his brethren. His testimony had weight; and they received it with raptures (Luke xxiv. 34). And yet after a little, and because of the very preciousness of their new-born hope, they begin to be inquisitive and critical in reference to its foundation. What if Peter himself had been overmastered by his imagination? What if, under the influence of his sanguine nature, and with that haste which has been all along his besetting failing, he had mistaken a mere subjective vision for an objective fact? Then perhaps the assembled brethren would question Peter, and cross-question him, going into the varied details of the appearance, until, it may be, Peter's own faith began to waver. When once in the full flow of this doubting mood, they would be ready enough to set aside

the testimony of the two comparatively humble brethren who had returned from the country. They would say, "No doubt the brethren are honest. But surely it cannot be true that He who actually on the Cross gave up the ghost, and was then buried, is now literally alive again! How could such a thing be? Must not the brethren and Peter himself, as well as Mary, be the dupes of their fond imaginations?" Such would naturally be the state of the disciples' minds for a considerable length of time—the tide of thought and feeling surging and resurging in contrary directions. And hence the facile conciliation of Mark's statement with Luke's.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Ver. 15. *Christ's commission.*—

**I. What is implied in preaching the gospel?**—1. It means to spread the good news. 2. To make known that revelation which God has given of Himself. 3. To exhibit the privilege the gospel offers. 4. To declare the precepts the gospel enjoins.

**II. To whom the office is committed.**

—1. It was not confined to the apostles. 2. The preacher must have a deep and a living sense of the importance of Divine truth. 3. The preacher must have good sense and a power of argument. 4. A spiritual and experimental knowledge of the gospel. 5. A particular call by the grace of God. 6. A fervent love to the Lord Jesus, and an earnest desire to advance His honour and interest. 7. An intense desire for the salvation of souls. 8. A willingness to endure hardship and persecution in the work on which he is engaged.

**III. Where and to whom is the message to be preached?**—Every rational being of the race of Adam is to receive this important message, for all have sinned and come short of the kingdom of God. 1. None are excluded by the decree of God. He is loving to all men. 2. None are excluded by natural or moral incapacity. They are not too weak, ignorant, or depraved to obey the precepts of the gospel.



IV. *The condition required from those who hear.*—Faith is required in order to have salvation, for the gospel is—1. A revelation of truths, and implies a persuasion of their certainty and importance. 2. An offer of privileges, and implies that we accept that offer in the way God has appointed. 3. A promulgation of laws, and implies that we acknowledge the authority of the Lawgiver.—*Preacher's Analyst.*

*Gospel responsibility.*—It was the saying of a great missionary preacher, "We shall soon have done with the gospel, but the gospel will not soon have done with us."

Ver. 16. *Belief and baptism.*—By joining "believing" and "being baptised," as both necessary to salvation, did the Lord mean to put on an equality the highest action of the soul in embracing the truth of God and of Christ and the reception of an outward rite? Certainly not. For He did not consider that the baptism which He ordained was an outward rite. It is, according to His own words, a new birth of water and the Spirit into His kingdom. According to the teaching of St. Paul, it is a death and burial with Him to sin, and a rising again with Him to newness of life (Rom. vi. 1-4), so that the baptised man must, no matter what the difficulty, count himself to be in a new state, born anew into the Second Adam, grafted into the True Vine, endued with a new life from Christ, and gifted, if he will faithfully strive to use them, with new powers against sin and on the side of holiness of life. It was the Lord's intention, by His death and resurrection, not only to deliver men from sin as individuals, but to incorporate them into His mystical body, *i.e.* His Holy Catholic Church, so that in the unity of that Church, in the unity of its faith, its hope, its charity, they might grow up, not singly, but together, in the fellowship of the One Body. And so the reception of His baptism being the outward sign of this, and the means for bringing it to each one, was

worthy to be put side by side with believing.—*M. F. Sadler.*

*Words applicable to nations.*—Whatever unbelievers think about individual souls, it is plain that these words have proved true for communities and nations. He that believeth and is baptised has been saved; he that believeth not has been condemned. The nation and kingdom that has not served Christ has perished.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*Nominal Christianity insufficient.*—Let a man (I speak of the generality of men) be asked upon what he builds his hopes of salvation. He will reply: "I am a Christian. I was born in a Christian land, of Christian parents, and baptised in the name of Christ, and therefore I am a Christian." It is well for him that he has been blessed with such advantages. But has he improved them as they might have been improved? The words of Christ are not, "He that is baptised shall be saved"; but, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." The name of a Christian will, of itself, do nothing for us; it will only be an aggravation of our guilt, if we be found without a Christian heart, without a Christian faith, without a Christian practice. But perhaps he will say: "I am something more than a nominal professor of the gospel. I am constant in my attendance at the house of God, and regular in the observance of the Holy Communion." But let him be asked again: Is the heart in all this? Is it done solely and wholly to please God? Is it done with seriousness, earnestness, and sincerity? Or is this outward shew of religion the result of habit, put on in conformity with the custom of the world, or to deceive and gain the favour of mankind? Does he enter the holy sanctuary with the full determination that, when he has been taught his duty, he will perform the same? Does he, as he kneels at the holy table, "acknowledge and bewail his manifold sins and wickedness," and, "intending to lead a new life," pray for strength and grace to

that God with whom alone dwelleth the power to bring him unto happiness? Does he "commune with his own heart" in public and in private, at all times and seasons, to discover whether he be wandering from the right way, from his duty, his religion, and his God, and with the purpose to correct what he finds to be wrong, and to improve what is deficient? The man who can answer these questions to the satisfaction of his conscience and his God will "be accepted with Him"; but too many, it is to be feared, are very far removed from such an advanced state of spiritual excellence.—*H. Marriott.*

"*Shall be damned.*"—"God is too good to damn anybody." Quite right. God does not damn anybody; but many damn themselves. Damnation is sin and suffering producing and perpetuating each other. Look at the low dens with their diseased, poisoned, putrescent inmates, their depravity, their profligacy, their brutality, their bodily torture, their mental anguish. Is not that damnation?—sin and suffering acting and reacting. Hell is that same thing projected into the soul's future. God does not damn men. He moves heaven and earth to prevent it. The Crucifixion was God's supreme effort to keep men from hell. How unreasonable to charge God with your death! Suppose I went, sick and suffering, through the stormy night to hold a light for you at some dizzy chasm; suppose you struck down the light which I had brought with so much pains; suppose you lost your foothold and fell into the abyss below: could I be charged with your death? Well, then, did not God bring you light? Did He not with scarred hand hold that light over your pathway? If you reject it and fall, can you charge Him with your death? No; oh no! "This is the condemnation, that light came into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."—*R. S. Barrett.*

Vers. 17, 18. "*These signs.*"—The

Holy Church doth spiritually every day what she then did through the apostles corporally. For when the priests, by the grace of exorcism, lay hands on believers, and forbid evil spirits to inhabit their minds, what do they but cast out devils? And any believers whatever, who henceforth abandon the secular words of the old life, and utter holy mysteries, and rehearse as best they can the praise and power of their Maker, what do they but speak with new tongues? Moreover, while by their good exhortations they remove evil from the hearts of others, they are taking up serpents: which miracles are greater, because they are the more spiritual; the greater, because they are the means of raising not bodies, but souls. These signs then, dearest brethren, ye do, if ye will (Ps. xci. 13; John xiv. 12; 1 Cor. xiii.).—*Gregory.*

Ver. 17. *The promise of power.*—This promise, observe, is contingent upon faith; and it is a promise of power over spiritual foes and over natural disqualifications. 1. Over spiritual foes, so that even demons shall be subject unto us. O Christian worker, therefore abandon not the hardest case. 2. Over natural disqualifications. The timid, shrinking Peter shall speak with boldness before three thousand men; and John, the hasty Boanerges, shall become the apostle of gentleness and love.—*E. A. Stuart.*

Ver. 18. *Safety amid danger.*—The Master promises to His disciples, on the condition of their faith in Him, perfect safety amidst the dangers of the work, so that what is harmful to others shall not hurt them. And this safety will consist not in the avoidance of evil, for the Master knew they would still be in the world, and that temptations would be round about them on every side. Therefore He does not promise immunity from danger, but immunity from harm. Yet this also, of course, only in the

pathway of obedience. We may not throw ourselves from the pinnacle of the Temple, and expect His angels to bear us up in their preserving hands, for we may not tempt the Lord our God; but right sure we are that no harm can happen unto us if we be followers of that which is good—that He doth give His angels charge over us to keep us in all His ways—that upon the highway of the Lord no lion shall be there. And is it not so? Take, for instance, sceptical books; and can you take up a more deadly serpent, or drink a more poisonous cup? If you take it up simply from curiosity, or because the book is popular, and you covet the reputation of being liberal-minded or up with the times, even if you retain your faith, the poison of that book will oftentimes sting you in years to come. But if you read that book because it is your duty, because you wish to expose its fallacy to some young heart who is being led astray thereby, then you may take up the serpent or drink the deadly thing, and it shall not hurt you. And so it is all through. This man enters into politics strong in faith and in his desire to serve both God and man, and therefore walks erect amidst the pitfalls of public life, into which that poor miserable wretch, so selfishly ambitious, most miserably falls. This tradesman preserves his character unspotted and unsullied

because he is a man of God, when yonder huckster's conscience is seared day by day by the tricks of trade, until he grows so callous that evil ceases to cause pain.—*E. A. Stuart.*

*The promise of usefulness.*—"They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Yes, the blessing shall not end with yourself; others shall live by your side. You will only be helpful when you yourself are safe, and you will only be safe when you are helpful. Bring yourself into contact with those who are sick and sorrowing, and you will know the exquisite delight of doing good. But we must "lay hands" upon them, come close to them, bring our personality into touch with them. You can never do good if you stand at a distance from your fellow-men. The Risen Jesus has left you in this world as His representative, to heal the sorrows of the world, and works through you in conferring blessings upon the outcast and the sad.—*Ibid.*

*Christian treatment of the sick.*—In nothing has the spirit of Christianity been more apparent than in the treatment of the sick. The latest discoveries of medical science are, in our great hospitals and infirmaries, immediately on their discovery, applied to the benefit of the poorest and meanest who have been taken to these places.—*M. F. Sadler.*

#### MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19, 20.

(PARALLELS: LUKE xxiv. 50, 51; ACTS i. 9.)

*Christ's ascension and co-operation.*—The words "after the Lord had spoken unto them" may refer primarily to the commission which He had just given to His disciples to "go into all the world and to preach the gospel to every creature," and to the various instructions and promises with which that commission was accompanied. But the words probably refer also to all that Christ had spoken to His disciples after His resurrection from the dead; for we are told in His history that after His crucifixion "He shewed Himself alive by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Eighteen hundred years have passed away since these events occurred, and we never saw either the Saviour or the apostles to whom they refer. But we believe the record that relates them to us, we make them the subject of devout and delightful contemplation,



and we feel that we have an interest in them which will never cease to influence our hearts through time or through eternity.

**I. Let us contemplate these apostles witnessing the ascension of their Lord.**—

1. The *place* from which He ascended was the Mount of Olives—that part of it which was situated in the district of Bethany (Luke xxiv. 50). It was the place to which He had been accustomed to resort after the labours and fatigues of the day, and where He had often spent whole nights in meditation and in prayer; and now He Himself ascends from the same place whence His nightly supplications had so often ascended to His Father and to our Father, to His God and to our God. It was the place over which He passed as He made His last entry into Jerusalem, where He was crowned with thorns; and from which He now passes to the heavenly Jerusalem, to be crowned with glory and honour. It was the place to which He repaired with His disciples, after they had partaken of the Last Supper; for when they had sung a hymn they went into the Mount of Olives. There His disciples forsook Him and fled, and there He was afterwards parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 2. The *manner* in which He ascended is minutely recorded (Luke xxiv. 51). His ascension was visible, and His disciples were eye-witnesses of His majesty, as He rose higher and higher from the mountain, till the cloud covered Him and concealed Him from their sight. But the most interesting fact connected with His ascension is that it took place whilst He was in the act of blessing His disciples. When the high priest among the Jews began to bless the congregation, he lifted up his hands and exclaimed, “The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord cause His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift upon thee the light of His countenance, and give thee peace.” And in like manner our Great High Priest lifted up His hands—those hands which had so often given bread to the hungry, health to the sick, life to the dead, salvation to the lost—those hands which had so lately bled upon the Cross, and in which the print of the nails was yet visible—those bountiful and wounded hands He lifted up, and then He began to bless His disciples. “And it came to pass, while He blessed them” (after His blessing was begun, but before it was concluded)—“it came to pass, while He blessed them” (for how often does it happen that a blessing precedes a bereavement!)—“He was parted from them”; and He rose from the mountain, with His hands still lifted up, and with the blessing still dropping from His lips, and brightening as He took His flight. 3. Having thus left the earth, our text declares that “He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.” As He had descended to earth in the likeness of men, and in order, through sufferings and death, to become the Mediator, He now, having procured eternal redemption for us, ascends in His mediatorial capacity, and rises “far above all principality,” etc. And what, think you, must have been the rapturous joy that thrilled through heaven, when the expectant and listening silence of its inhabitants was broken by the shout, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in”! And having thus entered, He was received by the Everlasting Father, who declared, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” “Let all the angels of God worship Him!” 4. Such an ascension into heaven, and such a reception there, is in beautiful harmony with the dignity of the Saviour’s person, and with the glory which He had acquired as the Author of man’s redemption; and it was also a pledge and a preparation for the triumphant spread of His gospel in the world.

**II. Contemplate the apostles going forth to preach His gospel.**—The ministry of the gospel is represented by the apostle as one of the first gifts which the Ascended Saviour acquired and bestowed upon the world (Eph. iv. 11, 12). We

therefore find that immediately after the ascension of their Lord these disciples "went forth, and preached everywhere." 1. The subject of their preaching was the gospel of Jesus Christ, or "the Word," as it is emphatically called in our text. And after what they had seen and heard and experienced themselves, on what other subject could they preach and what other name could they declare? It was not merely as an important fact that they contemplated His death, but as having essentially connected with it a moral meaning and design, as the only and the all-sufficient means of redemption to a ruined world. He was wounded; but it was for our transgressions. He was bruised; but it was for our iniquities. He suffered; but He suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. He bled; but in His blood there is redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. He died; but through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. In preaching this doctrine the apostles warned sinners, as we warn you, to beware of rejecting Christ by trusting for salvation to your own works; and they exhorted sinners, as we exhort you, to go at once to Christ, and to go to Him laden with the full weight of all your guilt and condemnation, because "He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost." 2. They communicated this gospel to mankind by preaching. Nothing can equal the impressiveness of a living address from man to man, where numbers are assembled, where the place which they occupy is sacred, where the gospel is the theme, where the whole soul of the preacher feels and speaks, and where all are reminded that they are in the presence of God. Attention is awakened; emotions are excited; conscience is aroused; and the stream of sympathy flows from soul to soul, mingled with all those hallowed influences which render the gospel the power of God to our salvation. 3. The extent to which they preached this gospel was universal. They preached Christ first in the very place where He had lived, and died, and risen, and ascended. They preached His miracles to the very men who had witnessed them and experienced them. They preached His sufferings in the garden of Gethsemane and on the hill of Calvary where they had been endured. They preached His resurrection at the mouth of His deserted sepulchre. They preached His ascension on the very mount where He had been parted from them. But while Jerusalem was the centre of their operations the world was their circumference; and they went forth and preached everywhere, till they could say to the Colossians, "The gospel is come unto you, as it is in all the world."

**III. Contemplate the apostles experiencing their Lord's co-operation with them in their labours.**—Wherever His disciples worked as instruments He worked also as the efficient agent; for His power is omnipotent. And by this presence and this power He graciously fulfilled His own declaration (vers. 17, 18). 1. These Divine influences qualified the preachers of the gospel. The change which took place in the sentiments and conduct of the apostles, after the reception of Christ into heaven, was most manifest and remarkable. To that same Divine Redeemer let every minister of the gospel look for the knowledge, and the holiness, and the energy, and the pathos, and the patient perseverance, and for every qualification which is necessary to render him a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and instant in season and out of season, watching for souls as one who must give an account. 2. These Divine influences confirmed the truth of the gospel. As He sat at the right hand of God, He baptised them with His miraculous influences and power to such an extent that they could heal the sick and raise the dead whenever they invoked the name of Jesus. These miraculous influences are now indeed withdrawn. But as we can prove that these miraculous powers

then existed, we can appeal to them as a standing evidence in our day that the gospel of our salvation is the Word of God. But though the miraculous influences are withdrawn, the spiritual and sanctifying influences are still continued. 3. These Divine influences ensured the success of the gospel. Though its original ministers were only the twelve fishermen of Galilee—men without learning, without worldly wealth, and without worldly power—yet they became so mighty through God that heathen philosophers were confounded, heathen oracles were struck dumb, heathen temples were deserted, and so mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed that in about thirty years after the ascension of Christ the whole Roman world was conquered by the Cross. And it was a glorious conquest; for it was a triumph over mind and heart. And, thanks be unto God, the same Divine influences ensure the success of the gospel in every age; and many of you, my brethren, are living witnesses of its effectual working in the hearts of them that believe; “for our gospel has come to you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.” And believing as we do that the Ascended Redeemer possesses all power both in heaven and earth, we are sure that His moral government of the world will be productive of the purity and joy and universality of the Church, and that the time foretold by prophecy shall come, when to Him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.—*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*

#### OUTLINES AND COMMENTS ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 19. *The significance of Christ's Ascension.*—1. It was the end of the work of redemption. 2. It was the final triumph of goodness. 3. It was the exaltation of humanity. 4. It told of the continuity of life. 5. It inaugurated the reign of blessing. Let us realise that all gifts, both spiritual and temporal, come from Him, and so live that His benediction may be able to rest on all that we do.—*A. G. Mortimer, D.D.*

“*Received up into heaven.*”—There is something remarkable in these words. We habitually speak of Christ as ascending, but Scripture more frequently declares that He was the subject of the action of Another, and was taken up. See Luke xxiv. 51; Acts i. 2, 9. Physical interference is not implied; no angels bore Him aloft; and the narratives make it clear that His glorious body, obedient to its new mysterious nature, arose unaided. But the decision to depart and the choice of a time came not from Him: He did not go, but was taken.—*Dean Chadwick.*

*Why such slight mention of Christ's Ascension?*—It may seem remarkable that so great an occurrence should be

so little noticed by the sacred writers; for it is mentioned by two only, St. Mark and St. Luke, and these two who were not witnesses of it. And yet we need not wonder at this, nor that it should have held a less prominent place in the minds of the apostles than the Resurrection; for, indeed, that He who had risen from the grave, who had laid aside His earthly body and put on the heavenly, that He should go up to heaven, that He who had so clearly shewn that He came down from God should return to God—this was but natural, and could not but appear natural to the enlightened minds of the apostles. What else could happen to Him who had risen from the grave, and clothed Himself with His “house that was from heaven”?—*A. Grant, D.C.L.*

*Ascension joy.*—Truly if we could ever live in this day all were joy; for the Ascension is the crown of all joys, the rapture of all creation, the wonder of the blessed angels, the union of all being, the finishing of the earthly course of the Son of God, His entrance into glory!—*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*

*We ascend with Christ.*—The Ascension of Christ is the great pledge



and proof of our eternal state; our nature is for ever identified with His, so that as long as He is man we must be happy as one with Him. The great value of this transcendent fact is not merely that it is an example of our future ascension, but that it is our ascension begun—we in Him having risen to heaven—we in Him being at this time present before God—we in Him being united with the eternal plans and procedures of heaven, so that we are for ever blended with Christ—His property—His purchased possession—the very members of His body.—*Prof. W. A. Butler.*

Thou hast raised our human nature in the clouds to God's right hand, There we sit in heavenly places, there with Thee in glory stand ; Jesus reigns, adored by angels ; man with God is on the throne ; Mighty Lord, in Thine Ascension we by faith behold our own !

*Bishop Chris. Wordsworth.*

*Christ on the right hand of God as our Intercessor.*—The Epistle to the Hebrews over and over again reiterates that thought that we have a Priest that has passed into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us. And the apostle Paul, in that great linked climax in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, has it, "Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." There are deep mysteries connected with that thought of the intercession of Christ. It does not mean that the Divine heart needs to be won to love and pity. It does not mean that in any mere outward and formal fashion He pleads with God, and softens and placates the infinite and eternal love of the Father in the heavens. It at least plainly means this, that He, our Saviour and Sacrifice, is for ever in the presence of God, presenting His own blood as an element in the Divine dealing with us, modifying the incidence of the Divine law, and securing through His own merits and inter-

cession the outflow of blessings upon our heads and hearts. It is not a complete statement of Christ's work for us that He died for us. He died that He might have somewhat to offer. He lives that He may be our Advocate as well as our propitiation with the Father. And just as the high priest once a year passed within the curtain, and there in the solemn silence and solitude of the holy place sprinkled the blood that he bore thither, not without trembling, and but for a moment permitted to stay in the awful Presence, thus, but in reality and for ever, with the joyful gladness of a Son in His "own calm home, His habitation from eternity," Christ abides in the holy place, and at the right hand of the Majesty of the heavens lifts up that prayer, so strangely compact of authority and submission: "Father, I will that these whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." The Son of Man at the right hand of God is our Intercessor with the Father. "Seeing, then, that we have a Great High Priest that is passed through the heavens, let us come boldly to the throne of grace."—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 20. *The spread of Christ's influence.*—As the ages pass the influence of the love of Christ is conquering the selfishness of mankind. Even the statute-books of civilisation attest His growing power. The regeneration of a world is a slow process, but the healing rays from His glorified presence at the right hand of the Father—calling forth the verdure and fruitage of an ever wider imitation of His life—have in them the pledge of a future in which their influence will extend over all lands.—*C. Geikie, D.D.*

*Christ with His Church throughout the ages.*—He has been with His Church, keeping her from fainting, from decay, declension, so that she has gone on conquering and to conquer; so that the hundred and twenty became three thousand at Pentecost; and before the end of the century the three thousand had become probably

(Lange) half a million; by the eighth century the half-million had become thirty millions; by the Reformation one hundred millions. And to-day four hundred and forty millions of men give Jesus the Name which is above every name; multitudes that none can number doing so, not with lips only, but from the heart. He is with us still. A hundred years ago Carey reckoned up the population of the world with great accuracy, and found Christendom was only one-fifth of the whole; now it is nearly one-third. What another century of missions may

make it will probably exceed the hope and prayers of the most daring believer. We must remember He is most richly with us when we are "going into the world to preach the gospel," i.e. when we are on the move of mercy. Let us, for our personal consolation, remember He will be with us to the end of life and work and need. Let us remember that, in all work done for Him, He still is with us, and is ever making the foolishness of preaching and teaching omnipotent to bring men into His fold.—*R. Glover.*

### ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1. *The devotion of the holy women.*—The nightingale is celebrated for its singing in the night. We have, however, seen it maintained that it is all a mistake to suppose that she sings only in the night. She sings in the day as well, only, as other songsters are then in full chorus, her sweeter strains are not particularly distinguishable from the rest. But at night, when all others are hushed, her song is heard, and is more sweet by reason of the contrast with the surrounding stillness. Similarly was it with these women. They served in the day of bright sunshine, but their service was then overshadowed, so to speak, by the demonstrative crowd that thronged around Him. Amidst all the marks of attention paid Him, theirs did not appear particularly distinguishable. But when the voice of the noisy, effusive crowd was hushed during the dark night of trial and suffering which followed the brief day of popularity, they continued to give forth the music of love and sympathy through the dark loneliness of the night.

Vers. 3, 4. *Imaginary difficulties.*—Once upon a time—so the homely tale runs—a man and his wife started one pleasant morning to pay a long-promised visit to a friend some four or five miles away. The good woman carried her only little one with her; and they had not got far from home when she suddenly remembered a bridge they had to cross which was very old and very unsafe. Then she began to worry about it. "What shall we do about that bridge?" she said to her husband. "I shall never dare to go over it, and we can't get across the river by any other way." "Oh," said the man, "I forgot that bridge! It is a bad place. What if it were to break, and we fall into the water and be drowned?" "Or even," said the wife, "suppose you

should step on a rotten plank, and break your leg, what would become of me and the child?" "I don't know," said the man, "what would become of any of us, for I couldn't work, and we should starve to death." So they went on worrying and fretting and framing evil till they got to the bridge, when, behold! since they had been there last, a fine, new, substantial stone bridge had been built! They crossed by it in safety, and found that they might have saved themselves all this anxiety.

*Difficulties overcome.*—Men who undertake great works, like the Mont Cenis tunnel, the Atlantic cable, a railway across a continent, know that there are palpable, vast, and costly difficulties. There are costs which are certainly known, which civil engineers can readily calculate; and there are probable costs, which hinge upon conjectured contingencies; and there are possible costs which may be brought to light by the progress of the work. The men who furnish the capital necessarily look at these. They do not want to be in company with the man whose tower was not finished, of whom the Master told us. But, nevertheless, they go forward. Immense difficulties had to be overcome to establish the Central and Erie and Pacific Railways, the continental and sub-ocean telegraphs, and other great works; but they have been brought into existence, and stand to-day, because men who are not visionary had the nerve to dare to take up great burdens, and the shoulders broad and strong enough to bear them.

*Love never retreats.*—A little English drummer-boy was brought prisoner before Napoleon. The emperor told him to sound the retreat. "I never learnt it," was the prompt reply. Love never retreats. Love is ever accompanied by faith and hope, and in their company it always dares to pursue

its course, however the odds may appear against it.

Ver. 6. *The secret of Christ's influence.*—During the years which followed the outbreak of the French Revolution, and the revolt against Christianity which accompanied it, there was an extraordinary activity in some sections of French society, directed to projecting religions that might, it was hoped, take the place of Christianity. New philanthropic enthusiasms, new speculative enthusiasms, were quite the order of the day. On one occasion a projector of one of these schemes came to Talleyrand, who, you will remember, was a bishop who had turned sceptic, and so had devoted himself to politics; but whatever is to be said of him, he was possessed, in a very remarkable degree, of a keen perception of the proportions of things, and of what is and is not possible in this human world. The visitor observed, by way of complaint to Talleyrand, how hard it was to start a new religion, even though its tenets and its efforts were obviously directed to promote the social and personal improvement of mankind. "Surely," said Talleyrand, with a fine smile—"Surely it cannot be so difficult as you think." "How so?" said the friend. "Why," said Talleyrand, "the matter is simple; you have only to get yourself crucified, or, anyhow, put to death, and then, at your own time, to rise from the dead, and you will have no difficulty."—*Canon Liddon.*

*Nature's testimony to the Resurrection.*—In the life of Michael Faraday there is a very touching and instructive reference to the Resurrection. He tells us that during his travels on the Continent he was particularly struck with the beauty and simplicity of the little posts of remembrance set up on the graves in a quiet little graveyard in Switzerland. He speaks of one grave which more than any of the others arrested his attention. Some one was too poor to put up an engraved brass plate, or even a painted board, but had written on a piece of paper the dates of the birth and death of the one whose remains were resting below. The piece of paper was fastened to a board, and mounted on the top of a stick at the head of the grave. The paper was protected from the rain by a small roof, the ledge of which protruded sufficiently to carry the water away from the board. It was a very simple contrivance to memorialise a friend. But on examining the contrivance Faraday saw that Nature had contributed her part towards that humble memorial. Because under that little shelter formed by the protruding ledge, and by the side of the inscription on the paper, a caterpillar had attached itself, and there had passed through its death-like state of a chrysalis, and ultimately assumed its finished state of a butterfly, and had winged

its flight from the spot, leaving its corpse-like relics behind. And the young scientist turned away from that humble grave, his heart strengthened in the belief of the Resurrection, and his thoughts kindled into a glow by the contemplation of the wonderful works of God.

Ver. 14. *Unbelief unreasonable.*—To one who affected to question the received account of the death of Julius Cæsar we should not say "You want faith," but "You want sense."—*Isaac Taylor.*

Ver. 15. *How to preach.*—A wise clergyman, now deceased, once said he had learned to preach not only so that people could understand him if they had a mind to, but also that they could not misunderstand him if they wanted to. A hint here to all called upon to make statements with pen or lips.

*The preservation of the gospel.*—The monks of Lindisfarne set sail for Ireland with the book of the Gospels; a storm arose; the book fell overboard and was lost: they were driven back to the English coast. Disconsolate, they went in quest of the precious volume: for a long time they searched in vain, but at length (so says the story) a miraculous revelation was vouchsafed to them, and, following its directions, they found the book on the sand, far above high-water mark, uninjured by the waves, nay, even more beautiful for the disaster. Does not this story well symbolise the power of the gospel working on the Church? Through the carelessness of man it may disappear amidst the confusion of the storm, the waves may close over it and hide it from human sight, but lost—lost for ever—it cannot be.—*Bishop Lightfoot.*

*Preaching Christ everywhere.*—Dr. Boaz, of Calcutta, tells in his journal of the following incident, which happened to him and a fellow-missionary at the great fair on Saugor Island, whither they had come to preach to the assembled multitudes. While they were speaking, "a respectable-looking man, in evident astonishment," came upon the scene, and exclaimed: "What, are you here also? When I am in the north of Calcutta, there I am sure to meet you, and hear you speaking about Jesus Christ. When business takes me to the south of the city, there you are again, telling the people about the same Jesus Christ; and if I go to a distant village, I am sure to hear the same story; and here, in the midst of the very jungles, I hear the name of Christ. What is all this? You seem to be everywhere, and always talking about the same thing. Who would have thought to hear anything about Jesus Christ in such a dreary spot as this?"

*The true preacher a Divine creation.*—



Speaking of art-training, Mr. Ruskin says: "Until a man has passed through a course of academy studentship, and can draw in an improved manner with French chalk, and knows fore-shortening, and perspective, and something of anatomy, we do not think he can possibly be an artist. What is worse, we are very apt to think that we can *make* him an artist by teaching him anatomy, and how to draw with French chalk, whereas the real gift in him is utterly independent of all such accomplishments." So the highest powers of the teacher or preacher, the power of interpreting the Scriptures with spiritual insight, of moving the hearers to earnest worship and decision, may exist with or without the culture of the schools. Learned Pharisees are impotent failures compared with a rough fisherman Peter anointed with the Holy Ghost. Inspiration is more than education.

*Missionary zeal.*—Raymond Lully, or Lullius, to whom the Arabic professorship at Oxford owes its origin, was the first Christian missionary to the Moslems. When shipwrecked near Pisa, after many years of missionary labour, though upwards of seventy, his ardour was unabated. "Once," he wrote, "I was fairly rich; once I had a wife and children; once I tasted freely of the pleasures of this life. But all these things I gladly resigned that I might spread abroad a knowledge of the truth. I studied Arabic, and several times went forth to preach the gospel to the Saracens. I have been in prisons; I have been scourged; for years I have striven to persuade the princes of Christendom to befriend the common cause of converting the Mohammedans. Now, though old and poor, I do not despair; I am ready, if it be God's will, to persevere unto death." And he died so, being stoned to death at Bugia, in Africa, in 1314, after gathering a little flock of converts.

*Missionary enthusiasm.*—In the first centuries every Christian looked on it as a part of his life to be God's missionary, and for centuries the Church produced men like Boniface and Columban. Then for a thousand years the darkness was only broken here and there by a man like St. Louis of France or St. Francis of Assisi. It is to Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians that we owe the revival of missionary zeal. In the last century missionaries were regarded as foolish and rash, and I know not what. When Carey proposed to go as a missionary to India, he was told that if God wished to convert the heathen He would doubtless do so in His own way. Think of John Eliot, the lion-hearted "apostle of the Indians," and his motto that prayer and painstaking can accomplish everything. Think of young and sickly David Brainerd going alone into the wild forests of America and among their wilder denizens, with the words, "Not from

necessity but from choice, for it seems to me that God's dealings towards me have fitted me for a life of solitariness and hardship." Think of Adoniram Judson and the tortures he bore so cheerfully in his Burmese prison. And we, too, in these days have seen Charles Mackenzie leave the comforts of Cambridge to die amid the pestilent swamps of the Zambesi, and Coleridge Patteson, floating, with his palm branch of victory in his hand, over the blue sea among the Coral Isles. Nor do I know any signs more hopeful for the nation than these, that our public schools are now founding missions in the neglected wastes of London, and our young athletes are going out as poor men to labour in China and Hindostan.—*Dean Farrar.*

Christ wants to get the gospel into every home in the world; and the way He wants to do this is through the hearts and hands of those whom He has already saved. If we do not carry the good news, the lost will not receive it at all. It is told of a boy who was converted that at once he started to walk—for he was poor and could not afford to go by train—away to a place more than a thousand miles from his home, to tell his brother about Christ. History relates that the early Christians, many of them, were so eager to carry the gospel everywhere, that they even hired themselves out as servants or sold themselves as slaves, that they might be admitted into the homes of the rich and great among the heathen, to live there, and thus have opportunity to proclaim the love of Jesus and His salvation.

A non-missionary Church is like Coleridge's ice-ship, manned by dead men from prow to stern.

A clergyman was once asked by the Duke of Wellington, "How are you getting on with the propagation of the gospel abroad? Is there any chance of the Hindoos becoming Christians?" To which the clergyman replied, "Oh no! I do not see anything doing there; I see no reason to suspect any work of the kind being successful." "Well," said the duke, "what have you to do with that? What are your marching orders? Are they not, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature'?" Do your duty, sir, and never mind results."

An English preacher asked some British soldiers, "If Queen Victoria were to issue a proclamation, and, placing it in the hands of her army and navy, were to say, 'Go ye into all the world and proclaim it to every creature,' how long do you think it would take to do it?" One of these brave fellows, accustomed to obey orders without hesitation or delay, and at peril of life, promptly answered, "Well, I think we could manage it in about eighteen months."

Ver. 16. *Baptism in the apostolic age.*—It coincided with the greatest religious change

which the world had yet witnessed. Multitudes of men and women were seized with one common impulse, and abandoned by the irresistible conviction of a day, an hour, a moment, their former habits, friends, associates, to be enrolled in a new society, under the banner of a new faith. That new society was intended to be a society of "brothers," bound by ties closer than any earthly brotherhood—filled with life and energy such as fall to the lot of none but the most ardent enthusiasts, yet tempered by a moderation, a wisdom, and a holiness such as enthusiasts have rarely possessed. It was, moreover, a society swayed by the presence of men whose words even now cause the heart to burn, and by the recent recollections of One whom, "not seeing, they loved with love unspeakable." Into this society they passed by an act as natural as it was expressive. The plunge into the bath of purification, long known among the Jewish nation as the symbol of a change of life, was still retained as the pledge of entrance into this new and universal communion—retained under the sanction of Him into whose name they were by that rite "baptised." In that early age the scene of the transaction was either some deep wayside spring or well, as for the Ethiopian, or some rushing river, as the Jordan, or some vast reservoir, as at Jericho or Jerusalem, whither, as in the baths of Caracalla at Rome, the whole population resorted for swimming or washing. The water in those Eastern regions, so doubly significant of all that was pure and refreshing, closed over the heads of the converts, and they rose into the light of heaven new and altered beings. It was natural that on such an act were lavished all the figures which language could furnish to express the mighty change—"Regeneration," "Illumination," "Burial," "Resurrection," "A new creation," "Forgiveness of sins," "Salvation." Well might the apostle say, "Baptism doth even now save us," even had he left his statement in its unrestricted strength to express what in that age no one could misunderstand. But no less well was he led to add, as if with a prescience of coming evils, "Not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. iii. 21).—*Dean Stanley.*

*New birth in baptism.*—An old man of eighty was baptised in America by a missionary, and thenceforth led a life devoted to God. Two years later he was lying on his death-bed, and when asked his age he replied, "I am only two years old, for my life began when I was born for God in baptism; the previous eighty years were a life of death."

*Saved.*—At the wreck of the steamer *Atlantio* on the coast of Halifax hundreds of lives were lost. Amongst the passengers

who escaped was a Christian merchant from Boston, who, as soon as he could reach a telegraph office, sent a message to his family. It contained only a single word, but it was worth more to them than all the world. It was the word *Saved*. Afterwards the merchant had the telegram framed and hung up in his office to remind him of God's mercy to him.

Ver. 19.—It was an ancient myth that the Milky Way was the bright track made by the flashing wheels of the car of Phaethon, driving through the skies; but the Man of Calvary, ascending from the Mount of Olives to His celestial throne, has left across the heavens a brighter and more glorious pathway than the pale light of far-off stars. He has brought life and immortality to light, and millions who believe in His name have in all ages seen and rejoiced in His light, and by it been guided to the realm of everlasting day.

Ver. 20. "*The Lord working with them.*"—That is a sweet legend hanging about an old church in England, and it tells the great truth well,—how centuries ago, when the monks were rearing it, a new temple for the worship of their God, there came among the workers a strange monk, unasked, who always took on himself the heaviest tasks; and how at last, when a particularly gigantic beam was needed for a position as important as that of the keystone of an arch, and when, with sweating strain and united effort, it was lifted to its place, it was strangely found to be some feet too short. No device of the builders could remedy it; they had tried their best with it, they had used the most careful measurement they knew, but how sadly they had failed! There it was, too short, and their utmost skill could not find remedy. The night closed in upon the tired workers, and they went to their rest with sore hearts, leaving only this unknown monk, who would go working on. But when the morning came, and the workers came forth again, they saw the sunlight falling on the beam exactly in its place, lengthened to the precise dimensions needed, and resting accurately on its supports. But the unknown monk had disappeared. Yet the workers knew Him now, and were certain they could carry the temple onward to its topmost turret. For He who had been working with them and supplying their lack of perfect work, they came now to know, was none other than the Lord Himself. They were not unhelped toilers. Nor are we.

*God working with man.*—When Robert Morrison went out to China, he stopped for a little while in New York, and one of the American millionaires turned to him, and in a supercilious way said, "Mr. Morrison,

do you expect to make any impression on China?" Robert Morrison, in the kingliness of a consecrated manhood, replied, "I do not, but I do expect that the Lord Almighty will."

*Power of the Word.*—Cæsar Malan found himself on the diligence at Angoulême in the company of a sprightly young gentleman from Paris. He proved to be a materialist, who, when his companion drew out the New Testament, treated it as "a book of fables, good enough for children." Though tempted to expose to him by argument the folly of infidelity, M. Malan thought it better to let the Word of God, as he said, speak for itself. So he read several passages. The young man shewed vexation, and his fellow-traveller, judging by this that his conscience was troubled, read still more. The infidel became very angry, then biting his lips he took refuge in silence. After travelling in this way for about half an hour, he suddenly exclaimed: "I should like to have a book like that, for I begin to believe that what it contains is true, and that I have been deceiving myself." M. Malan gave the young man his Testament; and meeting him afterwards at Bordeaux, he found that he was attentively studying it, and that in every way he shewed it had made a profound impression upon him. "When I saw this fruit of the Word of God," said M. Malan, "I rejoiced that I had not spoken of myself and of my own reasons."

*Divine energy of Christianity.*—Voltaire well said to Lady Chesterfield that the English Parliament patronised Christianity because no better system of religion had yet been found. Read the chronicles of Buddhism, Brahminism, Parseeism, and other heathen philosophies. Their logical work has been to quench the happiness of their devotees. Hours might be spent in portraying the transfigurations wrought by Christianity. She has recently lighted her vestal fires in Australia, Madagascar, and Liberia, and to-day each is a pillar of civilisation, shedding its radiance far out on the surges of domestic, civil, and moral gloom. Few benedictions of civilisation can be named that she has not pioneered. Over no acre has she waved her wand where the wilderness has not blossomed as the rose. Prejudiced sceptics speak of modern nations as being little improved over classic Greece and Rome. Look back to that period when the law of might was the law of right, when childhood and womanhood were in degradation, and when iron-hearted cruelty was enthroned in the metropolis of paganism. Read of the extensive butcheries of men in the sports of the Colosseum under numerous imperial monsters. Read of the successive massacres of the early Christians, from the coronation of Nero to the death of Diocletian, whose slaughter of God's saints

was so general that on his commemorative medal was impressed, "The Christian religion is destroyed." Even such infidel essayists as Bolingbroke and Gibbon are pre-eminently brilliant in their eulogies of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Rousseau and Bonaparte penned as eloquent tributes to the achievements of Christianity as did De Tocqueville, Pascal, or Bacon. Macaulay describes a gorgeous window made from rejected fragments of glass. So Christianity has taken depraved communities and converted them into moral populations. It is because Divine energy is essential to the mental, social, and spiritual uplifting of all lands, because at their gates Jesus knocks to-day more earnestly than Henry IV. knocked at the gates of Hildebrand, and because history attests the regenerative influence of Christianity, that the ascending Redeemer commissioned His disciples to see to it that His kingdom shall finally achieve universal ascendancy.

*Progress of Christianity.*—Arnobius, a heathen philosopher, who became a Christian, speaking of the power which the Christian faith had over the minds of men, says: "Who would not believe it, when he sees in how short a time it has conquered so great knowledge? Orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, and philosophers have thrown up those opinions which but a little before they held, and have embraced the doctrines of the gospel!" "Though but of yesterday," said Tertullian, "yet have we filled your cities, islands, castles, corporations, councils, your armies themselves, your tribes, companies, the palace, the senate, and courts of justice; only your temples have we left you free."

*Final triumph of Christianity.*—Travellers tell us that in Arctic regions, when the six months of night are ending, and the long day of sunshine is about to begin, the inhabitants ascend the peaks and await the magnificent sunrise. When his ball of light has chased from the ice-fields the shadows, and he rests like a globe of flame on the rim of earth, ere he begins to climb the rounds of a ladder of glory more luminous than Jacob saw at Bethel, the people shed tears of joy, and, embracing each other, they cry, "The sun has come to us, and the long night is over." So in fancy I see standing on the crests of all lands of heathenism the benighted races, looking for the appearance of the Sun of Righteousness to banish their long night of barbarism, idolatry, and cruelty, and usher in the unending day of Christ's universal reign. I seem to stand to-day in this vast and solemn presence. In vision I see the countless millions, Caucasians, Mongolians, Africans, Malays, and Indians. They crowd the summits of all the mountains of pagan provinces in fearful vastness of multitude. From the standpoint



of this commission, and with the telescope of this farewell pledge of the Ascended Redeemer, we can even now by faith see that splendid period in history when, from the tall tops of all mission provinces, the grand concerted acclaim shall ascend, "The Sun has come to us, and the long night is over."—*S. V. Leach, D.D.*

*Amen.*—"My heart wishes it to be exactly so," is the Chinese rendering of "Amen." The

value of this definition is that it is not a mere lip repetition of this blessed old Hebrew word, but a whole-souled, whole-hearted desire for the triumph of that which is good. Is there not danger that our "Amens" may become a mere lead and lip endorsement of the truth, while the heart is not in it? Let us be sure that in everything excellent that is presented to us we can say of a verity, "Amen, my heart wishes it to be exactly so."

## APPENDIX.

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[For this interesting review of the evidence for and against the Last Twelve Verses of St. Mark, I am indebted to my friend the Rev. F. W. Christie, M.A., Rector of St Mary's, Aberdeen.]

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### NOTE ON ST. MARK XVI. 9—20.

THE great majority of modern scholars are agreed that with the eighth verse of this chapter the genuine work of St. Mark comes abruptly to an end, and that the twelve verses which follow are an addition by another hand in the earliest sub-apostolic age. Westcott and Hort insert these verses within double brackets, as an interpolation, "probably Western in origin, containing important matter apparently derived from extraneous sources";<sup>1</sup> and Lightfoot ascribes them, together with the account of the woman taken in adultery (John vii. 53—viii. 11), "to that knot of early disciples who gathered about St. John in Asia Minor, and must have preserved more than one true tradition of the Lord's life and of the earliest days of the Church, of which some at least had themselves been eye-witnesses."<sup>2</sup> And so most scholars. On the other hand, such eminent critics as Dr. Scrivener, Dean Burgon, Prof. Salmon, Bishop John Wordsworth, and others, maintain, on grounds of external and internal evidence, that these verses are the genuine work of St. Mark. Dean Burgon's elaborate monograph (*The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to St. Mark vindicated*: Oxford, 1871) won the admiration of Lagarde,<sup>3</sup> and is acknowledged to have proved "that the external evidence against the passage has been greatly overstated . . . and that the patristic evidence resolves itself into that (perhaps ultimately of Origen, but immediately) of Eusebius."<sup>4</sup> Without presuming to settle so difficult a controversy, it will be useful to review the evidence on which the decision depends.

**External evidence.**—The verses are wanting in the two oldest MSS., the great uncial Bibles of the fourth century, Codex Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (Σ). Tischendorf has, however, pointed out that these MSS. are here not independent witnesses, as in Σ the last leaf of St. Mark has been written by the scribe of B.<sup>5</sup> In B there is a blank column—the only one in the whole MS.—after ver. 8; and in Σ the letters of the last page of St. Mark, which might easily have been written in one column, are *spread out* so as to carry over a few lines to the second column, as if to avoid leaving it quite blank. Dr. Salmon infers from these facts that both MSS. had, as first copied, contained

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<sup>1</sup> *New Test.*, smaller edition, p. 583.

<sup>2</sup> *On Revision of N. T.*

<sup>3</sup> *Expositor*, September 1894, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> W. H. Simcox, *Writers of N. T.*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Salmon, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 161.

the disputed verses, and that the leaves were then cancelled and rewritten by the original scribe of B. The scribe was evidently aware of the twelve verses, and rejected them. Eusebius (Bishop of Caesarea 315 A.D., died 340 A.D.) says of these verses: <sup>1</sup> "He that rejects Mark's section as spurious will say that it is not current in all the copies. The accurate copies at least end with 'afraid.' For this is the end in nearly all the copies." Eusebius himself, the great critic of that century, seems to have rejected this section, for the so-called Eusebian Canons were not carried beyond ver. 8. The words of Eusebius just quoted are almost verbally repeated by Jerome (circ. 400 A.D.),<sup>2</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem (circ. 400 A.D.), and Severus of Antioch (circ. 500 A.D.). Doubts about the genuineness of this section were therefore familiar to them. The evidence of the important Armenian Version made in the fifth century is specially interesting. All MSS. prior to 1100 A.D. omit the verses. Later MSS. containing them have "Here ends Mark's Gospel" after "afraid," and then after a pause continue with vers. 9-20. There is, however, one old MS. in the Patriarchal Library at Etelmiadzin which not only gives the verses, but seems to throw light upon their origin. This MS. was examined by Mr. F. C. Conybeare in 1891, and in the *Expositor* for October 1893 he describes it and gives his conclusions. The MS. is an Evangelium written about 986 A.D., and purporting to have been copied from a true and accurate Armenian exemplar. St. Mark is written out to xvi. 8. Then there is a space of two lines, after which in the same uncial hand, only in red—a distinction otherwise reserved for the titles of the four Gospels themselves—is written "Ariston Eritzou," which means "Of the Presbyter Ariston." This title occupies one whole line (the book is written in double columns), and then follow the last twelve verses, still in the same hand. This discovery of Mr. Conybeare's is an important one. The heading no doubt embodies a very ancient tradition, and may meet with verification elsewhere. Mr. Conybeare identifies this Ariston the Presbyter with the Ariston mentioned by Papias (Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, iii. 39) as one of the elders who were disciples of the Lord. Dr. Resch<sup>3</sup> thinks he was Ariston of Pella, a Jewish Christian who wrote about 140 A.D., and who—Dr. Resch thinks after this discovery—also arranged the Canon of the Gospels. There are also MSS. which exhibit a *duplicate ending*. The uncial Codex L, eighth century, in the National Library at Paris, noted for its frequent agreement with  $\aleph$  and B; breaks off after ver. 8, and then continues:<sup>4</sup> "The following also is current: 'And they briefly brought word of all the things that were commanded them to Peter and his company: but after these things Jesus Himself also sent forth by them from the east even unto the west the holy and incorruptible preaching of the eternal salvation.' But then is also current the following after 'for they were afraid,' 'But when He was risen again,' etc." The same duplicate ending is also found in a fifth-century MS. of the old Latin, the Codex Bobiensis. The alternative ending is added in the margin of the Harklean Syriac (616 A.D.), and is found in various MSS. of the Memphitic and Æthiopic versions. In the recently discovered Sinai Palimpsest of the Old Syriac, allied to the Curetonian, the text of St. Mark ends with ver. 8, as in  $\aleph$ , B (see *Guardian*, October 31st, 1894). On the other hand, the twelve verses are found in the other two great uncial MSS., the Codex Bezae (D) and the Codex Ephreimi (C), both of the fifth century; in all the other uncial MSS.; in MSS. of the old Latin (including the important Codex Colbertinus); in the Vulgate; in three Syriac versions (Curetonian, Peschito, Jerusalem); in the Gothic and various Memphitic and Æthiopic MSS.

<sup>1</sup> *Quest. ad Marimum*, iv. 957, ed. Migne.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* 120, *ad Hedibium*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Thinker*, October 1894, pp. 291, 292.

<sup>4</sup> McClellan, *New Test.*, p. 681



*Irenæus* (circ. 185 A.D.) quotes ver. 19 as St. Mark's (*Adv. Hær.*, III. x. 6). *Justin Martyr*<sup>1</sup> seems to cite these verses; but "decision seems impossible."<sup>2</sup> They are found in Tatian's Diatessaron (160-170 A.D.). *Victor of Antioch* (400-450 A.D.) wrote a commentary on St. Mark which had a wide repute (see list of MSS. in Burgon). The last words of his commentary are these: "Notwithstanding that in very many copies of the present Gospel the passage beginning, 'Now when [Jesus] was risen early the first day of the week,' be not found (certain individuals having supposed it to be spurious), yet we at all events, inasmuch as in very many we have discovered it to exist, have out of accurate copies subjoined also the account of the Lord's ascension (following the words 'for they were afraid') in conformity with the Palæstinian exemplar of Mark which exhibits the Gospel verity: that is to say, from the words 'Now when [Jesus] was risen early the first day of the week,' etc., down to 'with signs following. Amen.'"

**Internal evidence.**—Against the genuineness it is urged: 1. There is a want of connexion between this section and the foregoing. St. Mark would never have written consecutively *ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. Ἀναστὰς δὲ πρῶτῃ, κ.τ.λ.* Also Mary Magdalene is introduced in ver. 9 as if she had not been mentioned before in ver. 1. 2. The usual relation between St. Mark and St. Matthew fails in this section. Mark xvi. 1-8 is parallel with Matt. xxviii. 1-8, but there the connexion ceases. From Mark viii. 7 we might have expected a mention in the sequel of this appearance in Galilee, such as we find in St. Matthew. The twelve verses contain no mention of it, and must therefore be from another hand. 3. The diction is unlike St. Mark's. *πρώτῃ σαββάτῳ* is unique; in ver. 2 Mark had written the usual *μὲν τῶν σαββάτων* (cp. Gen. i. 5, R.V.). *ἐκεῖνος* is never used elsewhere in St. Mark without a substantive; here it occurs four times without a substantive. *θανάσιμος, μορφή, θεᾶσθαι, βλάπτειν, πορεύεσθαι, ἀπιστεῖν, παρακολουθεῖν, ἐπακολουθεῖν*, do not occur before in this Gospel. On the other hand, arguments for the genuineness of these verses based on internal evidence are not wanting. Dr. Salmon traces in the first fifteen verses of this Gospel a resemblance *in style* to the last twelve. These opening and closing sections are, he thinks, the *framework* in which St. Mark set the Petrine tradition. He also finds the *characteristic ideas* of the Gospel in these verses. Thrice does St. Mark alone of the Synoptics record the unbelief of men (iii. 5, vi. 6, 52), and thrice in this last section (xvi. 11, 13, 14) does this thought appear. Westcott also notices this correspondence (*Introduction to Study of Gospels*, p. 334). But nowhere has it been stated so fully as in a university sermon of the present Bishop of Salisbury.<sup>3</sup> St. Mark, he thinks, depicts Christ as the strong Son of God, Lord of spirits and men and nature, contending with and overcoming evil and unbelief. Hence miracles occupy so large a space in this Gospel. Especially does St. Mark dwell on the moral resistance offered to Christ by the hardness of the human heart. These being the general lessons of this Gospel, the last chapter fits on to the rest with a perfect and exact harmony. "What do we read, in fact, in the last chapter? It describes with greater fulness than any of the other Gospels, how hopeless and weak in faith the community of disciples was left by the Crucifixion,—how slow of perception and hard of heart they still remained, notwithstanding all that had been done for them,—how the women, going to anoint the body, found the tomb empty, and fled in trembling and astonishment and fear at the angel's message,—

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Taylor's article, *Expositor*, July 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Westcott and Hort.

<sup>3</sup> Sermon II. in *University Sermons on Gospel Subjects*: Parker, 1878. See also Addendum by same author to commentary on St. Mark, in Bishop Chr. Wordsworth's *Greek Testament*.

how the disciples disbelieved Mary Magdalene, to whom the Risen Jesus first appeared, how the two who met Him in another form, as they were going into the country, failed to convince the rest,—how, at last, He appeared to all Himself, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart; and then, finally, and after a long and gradual process, gained a conquest over their wills. Then it was that He addressed them, bidding them to go and preach the gospel to the whole creation, offering salvation to those that believe and are baptised, foretelling the condemnation of those who reject the message, and promising fourfold miraculous powers, like His own, to His faithful followers and messengers. Then, and not till then, when He reveals His full majesty by the transfer of these gifts, does He receive the title of ‘Lord’ from the Evangelist’s own lips. The word, though found not unfrequently in the reports of speeches in this Gospel, is used twice only in it as an historical title, and that in these last two verses. The *Lord*, it is said, after He had spoken with them, was received up to heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they, thus conquered by Him, are no longer faithless, but believing. Having gained them, He has gained the instrument which He came down to earth to fashion, the only instrument which in His wisdom He thinks fit to use in the conversion of the world—the instrument of personal faith begetting faith. And thus endowed they go forth and preach everywhere, not in their own strength, but His; for the *Lord* works ever with them. And as in His own ministry He has supported and illustrated His teaching with appropriate miracles and mighty works, so now He confirms their word with signs following.”

Whatever we may infer from the internal evidence as to the *genuineness* of these verses, one conclusion is forced upon us. These verses are certainly *authentic*. They have the ring of truth. “This section,” says Dr. Resch,<sup>1</sup> “is free from all affectation, and from all legendary colouring—such as, for example, we meet with in the pseudo-Petrine Gospel. It is rather characterised by a compendious abruptness, such as shews that the author of it says less than he knows.” Compare the vague generalities of the alternative ending with the fulness of independent knowledge shewn in these verses. Although the statements that the first appearance was to Mary Magdalene and that she bore the message to the apostles might conceivably be derived from St. John’s Gospel, and vers. 9 and 12 seem to reflect expressions in St. Luke (viii. 2, xxiv. 13), yet the section taken as a whole is plainly not the work of a compiler. It adds to our knowledge by explicit statement and vivid detail. Here only in the Gospels is it stated that our Lord rose again on the first day of the week (ver. 9); that the disciples mourned and wept (ver. 10); that they disbelieved the tidings of Mary Magdalene (ver. 11); that He appeared to the two *in another form* (ver. 12); that the disciples again disbelieved the testimony of the two (ver. 13); that the eleven were at meat when He appeared (observe the undesigned coincidence with Luke xxiv. 41-43); and that He upbraided them (ver. 14). The apostolic commission in vers. 15, 16, though resembling that in Matt. xxviii. 19 in the two points universal mission and the injunction of baptism, is evidently independent. The promise of signs to follow believers as such is a new one (cp. Matt. x. 8). And the majestic closing verses (19 and 20) stand alone in the Gospels in their assertion of the Lord’s sitting at the right hand of God and His continued working with the apostles.

**Concluding summary.**—After this review of the evidence, external and internal, it may be said by way of summary, that if these verses be from

<sup>1</sup> *Expositor*, September 1894, p. 228.

St. Mark's pen and formed part of his Gospel from the first, it seems very difficult to account for the multiplication of copies without these verses in widely separate lands, for the obstinate doubts which clung to them (which Eusebius states and Jerome repeats), for the existence of an alternative ending, and lastly for the tradition which ascribes the twelve verses to the presbyter Ariston. To account for all that by an imagined *accident* which may have torn away from some MS. its last leaf, on which just these twelve verses were written, and so gave rise to a mutilated family of MSS., is to assign a very inadequate cause. But on the assumption, to which so much of the evidence points, that these verses are an appendage by another though still authoritative hand, in the earliest times, all the phenomena may be explained. St. Mark for some reason left his Gospel unfinished.<sup>1</sup> It may have been, as Godet thinks,<sup>2</sup> the breaking out of persecution and the death of St. Peter which caused the interruption. It was no wonder then that some early disciple should, it may be by request, complete the unfinished narrative with an account of the Ascension; so that this Gospel, as it began "from the baptism of John," should extend to the "day that He was taken up," and thus correspond to the requirement of the chief of the apostles (Acts i. 22).

<sup>1</sup> ἐφοβοῦντο γὰρ might very well be the end of a sentence or paragraph. Cp. Plato *Protagoras*, p. 328, D, where a chapter ends with νέει γὰρ. But Plato did not end a *Dialogue* with a particle, nor would St. Mark end his Gospel with one. The reference to Plato is due to Prof. Marcus Dods in *Expository Times*, March 1894.

<sup>2</sup> *Studies on N. T.*, p. 38.





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*Baptism*: ch. i. 8; x. 13-16.  
*Holy Communion*: ch. xiv. 12-31.  
*Foreign Missions*: ch. iv. 30-34; x. 28-31; xvi. 15.  
*Evangelistic Services*: ch. ii. 17; v. 25-34; vii. 24-30; viii. 36, 37.  
*Special*: Workers, ch. iii. 13-19; 14; iv. 1-20; 21; xiv. 6-9; xv. 21. Worship, ch. vii. 1-23; ix. 5; xi. 17. Quiet Days, ch. vi. 30-32. Hospital Sunday, ch. i. 21-34; 40-45; x. 46. Harvest Festival, ch. iv. 26-29. Marriage, ch. ii. 18-22; x. 1-12. Children, ch. ix. 37; x. 13-16. Labour Congress, ch. vi. 3a. Almsgiving, ch. xii. 41-44.







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